

THE SPIRITUAL GROWTH
OF
THE PERSON
IN
THE THOUGHT OF
GABRIEL MARCEL

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CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
Abstract	1
Introduction	3
<u>CHAPTER ONE: The Bases of Gabriel Marcel's Philosophy</u>	13
PART I Participation	13
PART II Epistemology	17
PART III Recueillement	22
PART IV Faith	27
PART V The Problem as opposed to the Mystery	28
<u>CHAPTER TWO: Having</u>	36
<u>CHAPTER THREE: Being</u>	44
<u>CHAPTER FOUR: Personal Spiritual Growth</u>	63
PART I The Meaning of Personal Spiritual Growth	63
PART II The Salvation of the Soul	64
PART III From Selfish to True Self-love	68
PART IV From "Indisponibilité" to "Disponibilité"	74
<u>CHAPTER FIVE: Growth in Being through Others</u>	87
PART I The Relationship of the Self and Others	87
PART II The Self and The Other in I-Thou Relationships	92
PART II The Realm of "Intersubjectivité"	96
PART IV "Présence"	99
<u>CONCLUSION:</u>	109
<u>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:</u>	114
<u>BIBLIOGRAPHY: I Primary Sources</u>	115
II Secondary Sources	115

ABSTRACT

Gabriel Marcel's philosophy is a metaphysical search for "being" as it is discerned in the concrete situation which makes an individual to be. In particular he investigates the sources of "being" in his own life and concludes that man has a twofold mental capacity - to reason and catalogue logically through "primary reflection", and to arrive intuitively at "being" through "secondary reflection".

For Marcel man participates in "being" through relationship with others. There are several degrees of participating and man's spiritual growth demands that he advance from the categories of "having", founded on "primary reflection" and what Marcel calls the "problématique" - reality that falls short of "being". The essential distinction made in this thesis is between man in the grip of "having" and man growing away into "being". "Having" implies that man is alienated from himself, his neighbour and reality, especially through self-consciousness. "Being", on the other hand, requires man to lose egotism and "indisponibilité" and enter into interpersonal relationships. Man can become aware through his ability to recollect himself that he is growing in "being" and therefore saving his soul. "Being" for Marcel must be. It is a continuum from man at one end to the divine at the other, though Marcel leaves it to the individual to identify "being" and God.

Marcel's epistemological analysis of man's faculties appears valid, as does his distinction between "having" and "being" as an index of spiritual growth. His study of interpersonal relationships is also acceptable. There is some doubt, however, whether "being" is more than a psychological and spiritual state despite Marcel's assertion. "Being" for

him is interpersonal, but "being" as he describes it falls short of his own experience of it. Marcel's own intuition of "being" appears to be incommunicable. He also seems to have insufficient regard for man's ability to reason logically. Despite these shortcomings, Marcel's metaphysics can be regarded as making a valuable contribution to man's dignity and personhood.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE SCRIPT

DH:	<u>La Dignité Humaine</u>
EA.I:	<u>Etre et Avoir Tome I</u>
EA.II:	<u>Etre et Avoir Tome II</u>
HC:	<u>Les hommes contre l'humain</u>
HP:	<u>Homme Problématique</u>
HV:	<u>Homo Viator</u>
JM:	<u>Journal Métaphysique</u>
ME.I:	<u>Le Mystère de l'Etre Tome I</u>
ME.II:	<u>Le Mystère de l'Etre Tome II</u>
PEA:	<u>Position et approches concrètes du mystère ontologique</u>
PI:	<u>Présence et Immortalité</u>
PR:	<u>Entretiens Paul Ricoeur - Gabriel Marcel</u>
PT:	<u>Paix sur la Terre</u>
PU:	<u>Pour une sagesse tragique et son au-delà</u>
RI:	<u>Du Refus à l'Invocation</u>

INTRODUCTION

For Gabriel Marcel, philosophy is always metaphysics, a search which "consiste à se demander ce que veut dire être ou encore ce qui fait qu'un être est un être".¹ "Being", a term to be discussed later, is the concern of philosophy in Marcel's view. In particular he asks: "Does 'being' exist?" "What is 'being'?"² Marcel can even say: "Il y a un sens où il est vrai de dire que le seul problème métaphysique, c'est: que suis-je?"³ By this he means several things. Firstly, he is chiefly concerned with "being". Secondly, he is to reflect upon the self - "je". He asks whether the ego which deals with "being" can be assured that it exists".⁴ This is not an idle question but one he poses to lead himself out of subjective idealism. Does even the self that asks whether I exist have any reality? Marcel maintains⁵ that it is through a fiction that traditional idealism tries to maintain on the edge of being a consciousness that affirms or denies it. Marcel rejects the position of Descartes as proving only the ego as an organ of objective knowledge and separating the ego from its "being".⁶ The ego must be sought, he thinks, along with "being".

Marcel's solution is to affirm the existence of the "méta-problématique",⁷ a term which will be clarified later. This must be conceived as transcending the opposition between the subject who asserts the existence of "being", on the one hand, and "being" as asserted by that subject, on the other, and as underlying it in a given sense. To postulate the "méta-problématique" is to declare the primacy of "being"⁸ over knowledge (not of "being" as affirmed, but of "being"

as affirming itself). Consciousness is, for Marcel, enveloped in "being", interior to it.

The ego is a mystery in the precise sense meant by Marcel. It has no "frontières précises"⁹ and is unable to be separated from its here and now, its situation. The person's life cannot be considered, in Marcel's view, from the outside since it is "littéralement insaisissable".¹⁰ It escapes the enquiring mind.

The object of philosophy for Marcel is, furthermore, the consideration of the fundamental situation in which the individual finds himself placed as a human being. It is "ma condition d'homme elle-même".¹¹ The fundamental given of all metaphysical reflection, in Marcel's opinion, is the fact that in considering himself man is

"un être non transparent pour lui-même, c'est-à-dire à qui son être même apparaît comme un mystère".¹²

He describes man investigating himself as a person in a "labyrinthe".¹³ For Marcel the individual does not know "de quoi et pourquoi"¹⁴ he lives. His life is infinitely beyond the consciousness that he has of it, being literally "insaisissable".¹⁵

Despite this, Marcel's philosophy stems from his own experience. According to Etienne Gilson

"Gabriel Marcel fait partie de la génération de philosophes français dont la spéculation philosophique n'a d'autre source que leur expérience personnelle, si bien qu'elle ne peut durer que dans la mesure où sans cesse elle s'y rapporte."¹⁶

Moreover, Marcel's thought tries to reconcile the world to that which is most intimate to the human being so that man feels at home in his world. Man feels at home to the degree

he recognizes an order in the universe.¹⁷ Nevertheless, one of the fundamental facts about man, for Marcel, is his feeling of anxiety ("inquiétude").¹⁸ Here Marcel joins with many existentialist philosophers who write about anguish. For Marcel, however, man feels anxiety in a different sense - in the way St. Augustine defined it, as coexisting with joy, as "l'aspiration d'un moins-être vers un plus être".¹⁹

For Marcel man is a traveller on the way. His anxiety is the spring moving man to progress, and to lose it would mean death and immobilisation for him.²⁰ In Marcel's view,²¹ metaphysics is the act through which anxiety, in his sense, defines itself and suppresses or transposes itself. Anxiety is not the same as curiosity, which, Marcel thinks, takes its departure from "un certain centre immobile".²² On the contrary, anxiety for Marcel is not to be sure of one's centre, it is what causes one to seek one's centre or balance. While curiosity deals with the peripheral, anxiety, in Marcel's opinion, is more metaphysical since it concerns what cannot be separated from the person without destroying him.²³

This emphasis on the self as the origin of Marcel's thought does not mean that philosophy is carried out only in the interior of the subject considered as a spiritual being. In fact he thinks that the reality of the subject is in some way the goal of his philosophy. The subject is at stake,²⁴ so that Marcel compares its development to a drama. According to him, the most authentic philosophy arises from the very juncture of the self and others.²⁵ This remains to be investigated later on.

Marcel, therefore, believes that the starting-point of any true philosophy - a phrase which means for him "expérience transmuée en pensée"²⁶ - is to be found by investigating the

person's situation which makes him what he is. For him man is essentially "en situation".²⁷ Marcel's thought has sprung from his own experience,²⁸ particularly his early experience, which makes him say that his thought has not evolved but has rather been the elaboration of certain themes given initially, as in music.²⁹ He regards his own life and situation as "un infini",³⁰ and therefore as something which is only partially explorable. Marcel's view is that his usual philosophical method is to analyse not the fact of consciousness but rather the contents of consciousness. Marcel thinks that through what he calls "recueillement" the philosopher can arrive at a contact with his "bases ontologiques".³¹

Because Marcel investigates his own self in situation he speaks of the will to explore as his fundamental disposition as a philosopher.³² Another aspect of his self he explores is his "affectivité", for he writes "ma pensée s'est constituée avant tout à partir de l'affectivité, de la réflexion sur celle-ci et sur ses implications".³³

Marcel calls himself "un philosophe itinérant",³⁴ for the fact of being "en route" is the goal for him of all philosophical thought. On the way, the philosopher, in his view, meets himself, an encounter which fosters his reflection and the doubt³⁵ through which everything is put to question.

A further reason why Marcel prefers to start from the self in situation is his "méfiance invincible à l'égard de l'abstraction pure".³⁶ He regards his philosophical work as an obstinate struggle against the spirit of abstraction, a struggle which has been his from the first moment of his writings.³⁷

Marcel has, therefore, always sought what he calls "une philosophie concrète". A word which is equivalent in his

opinion to "concrète" is "existentielle".³⁸ None the less, in his view, the primary datum of such a philosophy is the non-transparency of self, by which he means the self is essentially what he calls a "mystery". He thinks there is no contradiction here provided discursive reason³⁹ is not applied to this datum, as this would reduce the self to a "problem".

Philosophy for Marcel is concrete when it refuses to enter the category of any "-ism".⁴⁰ or school. Concreteness does not imply empiricism, which in Marcel's opinion, is the most harmful and dehumanizing of philosophies. Concrete philosophy for Marcel is philosophy of the here and now,⁴¹ a thought which is "en proie au réel".⁴² Properly speaking, philosophy in Marcel's view must bear the marks of "la morsure du réel".⁴³

For Marcel, a concrete philosophy is "une philosophie de la pensée pensante".⁴⁴ In his view this is far from subjective idealism and, indeed, its opposite. In Marcel's opinion, "pensée pensante", another of his paradoxes, is made up only by a sort of constant "ravitaillement"⁴⁵ which assures its perpetual communication with "being" itself.

Marcel considers that philosophy must seize experience before it is objectified, and turn it into thought without undermining its very nature by a scientific approach. True philosophy in Marcel's opinion begins with the wonderfilled discovery and the recognition of the person's own existential situation that is investigated as lucidly as possible. It is in this situation that the person makes himself to be himself.⁴⁶ By this Marcel means that the person examines the origins of his own self - the "being" he shares, the way he attains to a greater share in "being" and the threats to

his full growth in "being".

Here Marcel wants to avoid the reduction of reality to abstract formulae and so seeks to approach "being" in another way - through "ontologie concrète".⁴⁷ He tries to lead others to approach "being" similarly, by "approches concrètes",⁴⁸ so that they will discover for themselves what they alone can understand. The object of this ontology is the concrete experience of each person as he lives it. Philosophy, as Marcel sees it, does not merely start from this but should try to remain within the experience itself. For him, profound⁴⁹ thought is the intellectual transmuting of an intimate experience of the ego before it becomes objectified.

Concrete philosophy is truly, in Marcel's view, what he calls "secondary reflection", a term to be discussed later. It is reflection upon an initial reflection and tries to return to the concrete beyond the determinations of abstract thought.⁵⁰ Thought is also concrete, according to Marcel, because it is based on existence, or rather what he calls "existentialité",⁵¹ a word which he admits is barbarous. It is nevertheless important because it is another way of expressing what he calls "participation" as precisely unobjectifiable.

For Marcel participation, as we shall see, is the basis of his philosophy. Thought, as Marcel views it, is either based on participation or it indulges in pure abstraction which tries to break the link between the self and the universe, with its presence to the world signified by the human body.⁵² Participation for Marcel does not mean that the universe depends on a relationship with the self, which is the view of the subjectivism he seeks to escape. Participa-

tion, according to Marcel, means the priority of the existential⁵³ over the ideal, an existential which is inescapably ordered to incarnated "being", to "being" in the world. Participation is not an objectifiable relation or communication.

Philosophy for Marcel is also concrete because it does not take as its starting-point an abstract analysis of a particular notion but rather begins from concrete examples and data. Through them it seeks the roots and structure of existence and "being", which always remains a mystery although participated in, according to Marcel.⁵⁴

Because of the richness of "being", philosophy for Marcel can never be reduced to a system. Like Pascal and⁵⁵ Kierkegaard, he refuses to conceive of life as a system, for there exist, in his view, no systems of life but only of thought. All systems deform the reality of human existence, according to Marcel, for man exists before all thought takes place. He prefers to think of his philosophy as a way⁵⁶ being followed through a countryside which is largely unexplored, or a road being constructed where there are only "traces discontinues".⁵⁷ Another metaphor Marcel prefers for his philosophy is that of digging,⁵⁸ which he likes rather than building, or of a foraging rather than erecting any edifice. He is inclined to think that the more he tries to explore his experience, the more what he might call his system appears to be unacceptable. He even thinks that the words "ma philosophie"⁵⁹ are strictly meaningless, as a philosopher, in his view, cannot trace the origins of his thought.

Marcel, therefore, recognizes that it is difficult to outline his thought in an "ex-cathedra" fashion.⁶⁰ He thinks it is impossible to present anything like an exposition or model of his ideas. For Marcel philosophy,⁶¹ unlike scien-

tific investigation, does not allow one to say that here is something certain from which the philosopher can move to extend his ideas. Marcel tends to believe that it is of the essence of true philosophic thought always to question conclusions reached. Philosophy for Marcel is not something one has. No true philosopher, he thinks, has ever considered his work as his attribute or possession⁶² and the moment he treats it as something possessed, he has brought death to his thought. The truth which is the philosopher's search is by essence unpossessable, according to Marcel. He makes a distinction between the truths to which science gives access and the "incommensurabilité"⁶³ of Truth, before which the scientific methods for reaching truths cannot be used. Truth in this sense is transcendent, for Marcel, in a way similar to his concept of "being". Science allows one to attain partial truths, Marcel thinks, leaving unattainable, by what he calls primary reflection, any glimpse of Truth.

Given that the person cannot know exactly what he believes or that by which he lives, Marcel considers that the function of the philosopher is best described as a sort of new "maieutic". In this sense Marcel opposes⁶⁴ those who would place him arbitrarily in the existentialist school and prefers the term "néo-socratisme" as better suiting his way of philosophizing. By "maieutic"⁶⁵ Marcel means to make emerge into the light of reflection the implications of thought or belief which ordinarily remain in a shadow from which the consciousness does not always lead them. For Marcel the essential function of the philosopher is to be a sower, a function which can be exercised only in intimacy, in dialogue, "inter paucos", he says.⁶⁶

Footnotes to the Introduction

1. ME.II P.22.
2. EA.I.P.214.
3. ibid. P.214.
4. PEA.P.54.
5. ibid. P.54.
6. ibid. P.54.
7. ibid. P.57.
8. ibid. P.57.
9. DH. P.137.
10. ME.I. P.187.
11. PI. P.20.
12. JM. P.281.
13. ME.I. P.187.
14. ibid. P.182.
15. ibid. P.187.
16. PSLT. P.23-24.
17. ibid. P.23-24.
18. HP. P.186.
19. ibid. P.186. Marcel replies to the objection that philosophy traditionally presupposes ataraxy as defined in different philosophical schools. How, therefore, can philosophy start from anxiety, he asks. Marcel thinks philosophy tends to impart inner peace by granting an aspiration towards such peace, which is his definition of anxiety. PI.P.22.
20. ibid. P.187.
21. PI. P.21.
22. ibid. P.21.
23. ibid. P.21.
24. ibid. P.23.
25. IBID. P.23.
26. DR. P.39.
27. HC. P.17.
28. Troisfontaines, R., De l'Existence à l'Etre: La philosophie de Gabriel Marcel, Louvain - Paris, Nauwelaerts, 1968. Tome I P.9. Hereafter referred to as "Troisfontaines". An example Marcel gives is the experience he gained during the first World War in working to find

- missing persons. This human experience played a fundamental role in the elaboration of his thought. DR. P.47.
29. ME.II. P.7. We see here Marcel's interest in music.
 30. DH. P.114.
 31. PEA. P.76.
 32. Troisfontaines Tome I. P.11.
 33. DH. P.114.
 34. PSLT. P.21.
 35. *ibid.* P.21.
 36. ME.II. P.7.
 37. HC. P.7.
 38. DR. P.35.
 39. *ibid.* P.35.
 40. *ibid.* P.83.
 41. *ibid.* P.85.
 42. *ibid.* P.88.
 43. *ibid.* P.89.
 44. *ibid.* P.21.
 45. *ibid.* P.22.
 46. RI. P.39.
 47. Bagot, P., Connaissance et Amour: Essai sur la Philosophie de Gabriel Marcel, Paris, Beauchesne, 1958. P.155.
 48. Troisfontaines Tome I. P.210.
 49. *ibid.* P.212.
 50. DR. P.34.
 51. *ibid.* P.36.
 52. *ibid.* P.32.
 53. *ibid.* P.33.
 54. PSLT. P.24-26.
 55. Marcel is compared to both these in PSLT P.23-24.
 56. ME. I P.10. Marcel thinks with Henri Bergson that some images can have a structural value.
 57. *ibid.* P.10.
 58. DR. P.23.
 59. *ibid.* P.24.
 60. PI. P.13.
 61. *ibid.* P.14.
 62. *ibid.* P.15.
 63. *ibid.* P.15.
 64. HP. P.72.
 65. PI. P.184. Such was the method of Socrates.
 66. DH. P.217.

CHAPTER ONE

THE BASES OF MARCEL'S PHILOSOPHY

PART I: Participation

Before we examine the categories through which man must pass to attain what Marcel views as growth in the spiritual life, we should examine the foundations upon which his whole metaphysical attempt rests. If Marcel's metaphysics, and in particular his epistemology, is acceptable then there will be little trouble in accepting the conclusions which flow from his foundations.

Central to Marcel's philosophy is his goal of "participation". This, according to Gallagher, is "the notion on which Marcel's metaphysics turns".¹ To understand what he means by this term the relations between the self and reality must be looked at. According to Marcel the self can treat reality like a book to be read,² page by page, over there against the reader. Or the self can be present to reality as if it were watching an improvisation on a stage.³ It sees the unity between the parts of the improvisation and in some way, therefore, in Marcel's terms, enters into the play because of this unifying observation. Or thirdly⁴ the self can really contribute to the improvisation, taking an active part in the play, so that it is not purely receptive and the play is not separate from the self. For Marcel it is this third case that best corresponds to the person's situation in the world.

Despite Marcel's differentiation of these three modes, it seems there is little difference between the first two. Reading a book and watching a play both require an equally passive onlooker and there is not the contrast between them

that exists between the first two together and the third. Taking a part in a play is obviously being much more involved in an action than reading a book or observing a play, even when the observer unifies the elements of the play.

As Marcel sees it, therefore, a person can be in the world like a member of the audience of a play - his taking part can vary from being a spectator to being an actor.

If the person is a spectator in the world,⁵ viewing reality from a distance, he shares perhaps a technological outlook by which he treats the world as made up of objects to be enjoyed or used without loving them. The spectator, in Marcel's view, remains alien to what he looks at. He can seek to modify what he sees by pragmatic science but the result is to make it alienated from him.⁶ To explain "alienation" it must be seen that as a spectator the person will tend to think he can manipulate what is inert before him, and be able to make inventories of what he sees. In Marcel's opinion, the more he puts stress on the objectivity, the over-there-ness of things, so cutting the umbilical cord between them and himself, the more he will affirm the independence of the world, its indifference to his destiny and goals, and so lead to his alienation from them.

On the other hand, the self for Marcel can take part in the play, trying to love reality, to root itself in the real world and so bypass and surpass the methods of the objectifying approach. The self can seek to make itself part of the whole, so that unlike the spectator who tries to make an abstraction of or to escape from the world, here the self as Marcel sees it, aims at loving and being faithful to reality. Marcel views this as the approach of the contemplative,⁷ be he artist or saint, and as the work of the true philosopher.

Contemplation for Marcel is not a simple "look" ordered to action, nor a scientific search for interesting specimens, but a turning inwards of knowledge which can only be done by what Marcel calls "recueillement". To contemplate, in his view,⁸ is to recollect oneself in the presence of something in such a way that the reality before which one recollects the self enters into the very act of recollection. For the contemplative, in Marcellian terms, the most pure type of action is not a doing but an act of praise or celebration. Thus contemplation is only possible for a being assured of its grasp on reality since it is inconceivable for an individual who remains on the surface of the real - be he technician or dilettante.⁹ Asceticism is required, therefore, to help the person reach contemplation by disengaging him, Marcel says, from what is superficial to allow him to take a deeper hold on reality. To sum up, Marcel views the work of the philosopher as not based on an objective, camera-like, seeing of the world, but rather founded on a bond which exists between, and goes to the core of, the philosopher and the heart of the world.

Not all philosophers, however, would agree with Marcel's view of their work. Few would dispute his idea of contemplation and art, but many would find his views unproven, though consistent with his whole approach to the life of man as citizen of the world of people and of God. The philosopher who takes a reasoned look at Marcel's idea of philosophy would find it somewhat vague, arbitrary, based on feelings, and so undefined as a cloud seeking definition. It is surely possible both to participate in and to love reality in Marcel's sense, and at the same time to analyse it objectively. It is not necessary, it seems, to make Marcel's rigid distinction

between the spectator and the person who shares in the play, as though the spectator cannot both criticize a play and be emotionally involved in it through identification with plot or character.

The true work of the Marcellian philosopher is based on this sense of participation in the world. Troisfontaines¹⁰ explains Marcel's notion of participation by showing how there is a variety of ways of participating, from objective possession to a non-objectivable participation. A person can, for example, share in a cake - his portion can be measured and weighed. Here there is sharing but no participation in an object external to his person.

One moves to participation, in Marcel's opinion, according to the interior disposition by which one enters a task or situation. Here the situation, for example a thanksgiving service for deliverance from war, is not objectified but entered into by a person's desire to take part, his will to participate. This desire holds, even if the person is physically prevented from being present at the ceremony by sickness. He is not objectively present yet he still shares in the service. According to Marcel,¹² the objective element can even be eliminated entirely if it is realized that this ceremony is only a certain particular expression of an act of adoration which is continuous and which is shared in through every act of praying. This melting into a larger act of love shows how a person can participate even non-objectively. The reality that is participated in enters and becomes part of him. "Non-objective" sharing, however, does not mean¹³ "unreal", for participation implies for Marcel the reality of something other than the person which is not only before him but with him.

Nevertheless, Marcel's notion of "non-objective participation" can seem vague and forced, despite his assertions. Sharing from a sickbed in a distant ceremony is surely a tenuous participation, and Marcel is writing before the days of television. Although barely real, it does exist, based as it is on Marcel's view of a loving approach to reality, founded on participation through desire. It may exist, but it is not real in the same sense that objective participation with desire to enter in is really participation.

Gallagher¹⁴ gives a summary of Marcel's view of participation as sharing in a network of relationships undergirded by what the latter calls "being", a reality to be analysed in a later chapter. "Participation is at once his manner of piercing through to realism and his avenue of escape from individualism. To be is to participate in "being". Do not fail to note the twofold affirmation of this formula: in existing, we trans-exist. In virtue of our "being" we are swept beyond our "being". Sensation represents but one side of this participation. And what can be said of it can also be said of all ontological participation: it is non-objectifiable. We cannot effectively isolate that in which we participate from ourselves as participants, since at every level it is the participation which founds the "being" of the "participants".

PART II: Epistemology

Just as the individual can participate or not in "being", so there are two corresponding types of knowledge, primary and secondary reflection, which either lead to or lead away from participation.

What Marcel calls "primary reflection" does not lead to

participation but aims rather at dissolving the unity able to be perceived through and beneath the world. This comes about in fact because the person viewing reality learns to name and categorize what he sees, so that reality, or what is perceived, is neatly ordered within the filing-cabinets of the mind.

The classification of objects by the mind is the work of "primary reflection", the ability of the mind to dissolve the unity of experience which is first put before man when facing things. Primary reflection cuts man off from the immediacy of his situation so that it hardens the first data of perception into objects, isolating them from an ego which forms independently of them, with the result that the subject becomes an element over against the world.

Reflection for Marcel, however, exists on more than one level. "Being", as Marcel defines it, cannot be reached by exhaustive analysis which, in his view, would reduce the facts of experience to elements increasingly deprived of meaning. Primary reflection for Marcel cannot attain what he calls "being" and "mystery" since it enumerates the facts of existence into disparate data, disregarding their metaphysical underpinnings.

There is, however, in Marcel's eyes, what he calls "réflexion seconde". Where primary reflection tends to dissolve the unity of experience, secondary reflection reconquers that unity. Secondary reflection is essentially the work of metaphysics¹⁵ which reflects on the work and data of primary reflection. It is "réflexion à la seconde puissance",¹⁶ not invalidating primary reflection, but, in Marcel's estimate, showing up its inadequacies. Where primary reflection abstracts from existence, secondary reflection takes thought

back into the real, recognizing the inability of the former to attain "being". It criticizes the methods of primary reflection, Marcel claims, illustrating their partial character and their limitations in any search for "being". It does not deny primary reflection's real attainments but points out its proper scope.

Marcel explains the way secondary reflection leads to participation by his view that such thought is based on intuition. He first calls this philosophical reflection "intuition réflexive"¹⁷ to express his view of it as founded upon an intuition of "being". He declares that on a certain level of himself he is

"en face de l'Etre; en un sens je le vois - en un autre je ne puis dire que je le vois puisque je ne me saisis pas comme le voyant. Cette intuition ne se réfléchit pas et ne peut pas se réfléchir directement. Mais elle illumine en se retournant sur lui tout un monde de pensées qu'elle transcende".¹⁸

Here we see the foundation of Marcel's metaphysics. It is based on an experience of "being" which is essentially personal to Marcel and fundamentally incommunicable. The empirical philosopher would deny Marcel's whole attempt, while the Aristotelian would be inclined to say he does not give sufficient place in his analysis of man's reflection to the human power of reason. Man's ability in the system of Aristotle to find truth through reasoning, logic and inference based on facts perceived finds little place in Marcel's scheme. Other philosophers would say that the above statement of Marcel is in fact meaningless since it declares that in one sense he sees "being" and in another way he cannot see it since it is not able to be actually seen. They could also

maintain that this intuition which does not and cannot reflect on itself is no foundation for a system of metaphysical thought. The reader will have to decide for himself whether to follow Marcel, whether he can accept the unproven nature of the assertions and whether he finds them contradictory, merely paradoxical, or "mysterious" in Marcel's sense of the word.

Moreover, Marcel characterizes¹⁹ this intuition as a possession which he has without knowing immediately that he possesses it. It does not exist for itself but it only grasps itself through the modes of experience on which it reflects and which it illuminates by this very reflection.²⁰

Marcel is here almost meaningless as he tries to express the nature of philosophical thought in its struggling towards participation. He says

"La démarche métaphysique essentielle consisterait, dès lors, en une réflexion sur cette réflexion, en une réflexion à la seconde puissance par laquelle la pensée se tend vers la récupération d'une intuition qui se perd, au contraire, en quelque façon dans la mesure où elle s'exerce".²¹

Marcel is attempting to avoid the objectifying nature of primary reflection which turns the matter of its thought into things. It is on the level of intuition that he holds participation can be glimpsed, as the basis of secondary reflection. Philosophical thought in Marcel's view is a constant tension between man's intuition of "being" and the objectifying power of primary reflection. Man's intuition he calls "intuition aveuglée,"²² as it can never be an object of thought. Metaphysics, as Marcel sees it,²³ is concerned with something given which, upon reflection, does not become transparent to itself but leads to apprehension of a mystery.

This mystery is reduced to an antinomy when discursive thought brings it to the level of what Marcel calls the "problématique". So in Marcel's view, primary reflection uses the language and methods of the world of "having" when it seeks to attain "being" which can only be reached through thought based on participation and immediacy in "being".

In the face of the antinomies to which primary reflection is reduced, secondary reflection in Marcel's view tries to transcend them by directly attaining "being". It can attain "being", he thinks, because "immediacy has never entirely forsaken the cognitive faculty. Thought arises out of immediacy: at the point of origin a non-conceptualizable contact is irrevocably established".²⁴ Secondary reflection, as Marcel sees it, revolves around this source. It is not quite intuition, for that would be to see it and hence to possess it. Seeing and knowing and having belong to the objective world for Marcel.²⁵ Nor is this source ever lost, else metaphysics would be impossible.

The only proof Marcel offers for this twofold reflection is man's own experience of thinking and perceiving. We can use an example, one not given by Marcel. Man is aware when he knows what milk is, for example, that it is white. His primary reflection will separate the object milk from the quality of whiteness it must possess. Although primary reflection can differentiate in this way between the elements of what is one thing, man can be aware²⁶ of the inadequacy of this sort of knowledge in Marcel's terms, since he can know it as one reality. Hence man's thought at some level²⁷ has not lost intuitive contact with the thing as it exists.

The same applies to man's ability to form universal ideas. Man is conscious, according to Marcel, that these

ideas miss the singularity of the thing as it can exist concretely,²⁸ and so human thought in one sense has never lost its grasp of the reality. Man, therefore, can correct his own ways of knowing. In Marcel's view,²⁹ when man thinks of mystery, of love, "being" and so on, he clearly does not think of them as objects but yet knows them while participating in them. Primary reflection puts an end to participation and falsifies the realities man participates in. In trying to understand this participation, man, Marcel thinks, sees the inadequacies of his own objectifying mind.³⁰ This means that man has about these primary realities a blinded intuition which cannot be seen but which, in Marcel's opinion, helps him appreciate the insufficiency of any thought which is not able to express adequately the objects of his intuition. Man, according to Marcel, lives with the constant sense of a hiatus between his own vision and any thought or language expressing that vision.

PART III: Recueillement

Marcel gives the name "recueillement" to the work of secondary reflection. He begins his discussion of "recueillement" in his lecture "Position et Approches Concrètes du Mystère Ontologique"³¹ by raising a possible objection. If the mystery at the heart of "being", the "méta-problématique", is "un contenu de pensée", how, as a consequence, can man know its mode of existence, and even in fact be sure that it exists. There is a further question whether indeed the "méta-problématique" is not highly "problématique". In Marcel's view, to think of, or more exactly, to affirm the "méta-problématique" is to affirm it as indubitably real, "comme quelque chose dont je ne puis douter sans contr-

adiction".³²

The "méta-problématique" for Marcel belongs to a realm where it is not possible to dissociate the idea and its accompanying certitude. Marcel declares that this idea is certitude, carries its own guarantee of certainty, and yet is something other and more than its idea. This statement of Marcel appears paradoxical and even meaningless to the reader. He seems to be saying that the "méta-problématique" must be, just as in his opinion "being" must be. Yet how can an idea be certitude and yet be other and more than an idea?

Marcel, however, goes on to argue³³ that the above expression "contenu de pensée" is most deceiving because "un contenu" is extracted from experience. On the other hand, for Marcel, a person can only attain "le mystère ... par une démarche qui nous dégage on nous détache de l'expérience".³⁴ Man, he maintains, must really detach himself from life, though this does not mean to cut himself off from reality. The reader of Marcel, nevertheless, is liable not to be convinced that there is a valid distinction here in the differentiation between an "extrait de l'expérience" and a "dégagement de l'expérience", despite Marcel's assertion.

The mystery of "being", Marcel continues, is present only to the person who discovers it through a positive act of his mind, through an interior grasp or "ressaisissement", which Marcel calls "recueillement". This act alone, in Marcel's view, detaches man from experience. Only a man³⁵ capable of recollecting himself can apprehend "le mystère ontologique", by which he means only such a man can engage in ontological reflection. By this act of recollecting himself man witnesses to the fact that, in Marcel's opinion,

il "n'est pas un pur et simple vivant, une créature

livrée à sa vie et sans prises sur elle".³⁶

Marcel allows that such a process as "recueillement" is difficult to define, but he holds that it is made up of two paradoxical aspects. It is essentially the act by which the person takes a hold upon himself as a unity, and yet it is a relaxation, a letting-go, in Marcel's view. Marcel leaves unstated what the relaxation allows the individual to attain and adds: "le chemin s'arrête au seuil".³⁷ On the other hand, the world of the "problématique", in Marcel's opinion, causes interior tension.

As Marcel sees it, even to speak of the "méta-problématique" runs the risk of reducing it to the level of a problem, especially when it is approached from the angle of psychology.³⁸ Marcel is firmly opposed to the view that psychology can enlighten the enquirer on the metaphysical value of "recueillement".

Through "recueillement" man, in Marcel's opinion, faces his life, he retires from it, carrying with him his "being". This accords with Marcel's view that man's "being" is not the same as his life. Man does not retire into himself, therefore, in "recueillement" as a pure subject of knowledge. Nor does "recueillement" consist in looking at something, "il est une reprise, une réfection intérieure".³⁹ Marcel is inclined to see it as the ontological foundation of memory. He favours the English expression: "to recollect oneself" as most adequately expressing his opinion of "recueillement".

Marcel declares that in "recueillement" man returns into himself in such a way that

"le moi en lequel je rentre, cesse, pour autant, d'être à lui-même".⁴⁰

He quotes the words of St. Paul to give his view of the onto-

logical meaning of recueillement in a concrete way.

"Vous n'êtes point à vous-mêmes".⁴¹

A further question Marcel considers is whether "recueillement" is to be identified with intuition. In his view the relation between the two is far from clear, for an intuition in the realm of "recueillement" is not and cannot be "given" as such. He holds that the more an intuition is central, the more it occupies "le fond" of the being it illumines, the less it is able to return upon and apprehend itself. If man reflects upon what could be an intuition of "being", he will see that it is not and must not be liable to become a part of a collection or indexed as an experience or some "Erlebnis"⁴² which appears able to be sometimes integrated, sometimes isolated and exposed to view. In Marcel's opinion, any effort to recall this intuition, or imagine it, is unfruitful. In his eyes, discussing the intuition of "being" resembles the attempt to play "un piano muet".⁴³ This intuition cannot be exposed in broad daylight since it is not something man possesses.

Rather than using the term intuition, Marcel prefers to speak of "une assurance qui sous - tend tout le développement de la pensée, même discursive".⁴⁴ This assurance can only be approached by "un mouvement de conversion",⁴⁵ by what, as we have seen in Part II, Marcel calls "une réflexion seconde". By this reflection Marcel means the enquiry into the possibility of initially reflecting upon "being", of postulating ontological questions, without actually knowing what "being" is. He adds

"Cette réflexion seconde, c'est le recueillement dans la mesure où il est capable de se penser lui-même".⁴⁶ A further reason for not applying the term intuition to "being"

is Marcel's opinion that intuition implies seeing and that the apprehension of "being" is without any doubt not a way of seeing.⁴⁷

Marcel adds elsewhere⁴⁸ that "recueillement" is linked to the act by which the subject brings silence to himself, a silence which is not an absence pure and simple, but on the contrary has a positive value. He maintains that it is

"une plénitude qui se rétablit par la résorption ou le refoulement du langage".⁴⁹

Nor, in Marcel's opinion,⁵⁰ does "recueillement" imply the cutting off of oneself from reality. It is for Marcel rather the act by which one turns toward the self, while maintaining one's hold on reality: "se recueillir n'est-ce pas rentrer en soi?"⁵¹

"Recueillement" has value in Marcel's eyes because it brings to bear the forces of love and humility⁵² which counterbalance the blinding pride of the technician obsessed with his technology. Through "recueillement" Marcel believes man can gain mastery even over his technical skill. He speaks of "recueillement" as "ce retour à la source"⁵³ which should be undertaken "en tâtonnant dans une obscurité presque complète".⁵⁴ "Recueillement", for Marcel, is "un voyage intérieur" by which man takes up contact again with his "milieu nourricier",⁵⁵ by which he can attain to "being".

This move by which man, in Marcel's view, takes up contact with his "bases ontologiques",⁵⁶ is not to be confused with "ce repli sur soi, cette contraction, cette crispation"⁵⁷ which, he believes, are inseparable from egoism and pride, and are "négation pure". (This egoism is to be discussed in Chapter Four.) The object of this contact with one's "being" can never be made explicit, according to Marcel. It gives

rise to . . .

"un pressentiment d'une réalité qui serait mienne, on plus exactement, qui me fonderait en tant que moi-même".⁵⁸

"Recueillement" for Marcel approaches "being" apart from all words and concepts.⁵⁹ It goes beyond all the powers man possesses, since it is an abandonment of them. As all "spirituels" have declared, "recueillement" takes place in a light which can in no way be confused with the clearsighted view which comes from understanding. "Recueillement", in Marcel's opinion, is a source of thought rather than thought itself. In his view man does not know from whom or what this light proceeds, but he maintains⁶⁰ it comes from a source which is "supra-personnel" rather than "impersonnel".

Through "recueillement", therefore, Marcel believes man can pass from the superficial ego of "having" and becoming to his deeper self which is alone capable of participating in the mystery of "being".

PART IV: Faith

Man's knowledge, according to Marcel, is, moreover, based on an opposition between objectifying and believing.⁶¹ Abstraction and faith are different levels of the work of the mind, corresponding, like primary and secondary reflection, to "having" and "being".⁶² Man, in Marcel's view has to renounce abstraction, and this renunciation he calls "faith".⁶³ It is not faith in the strict theological sense of belief in God on His authority, and Marcel does not make this clear. Man, he says, has to believe in the intelligibility of the world so as not to give in to the temptation of thinking that it is absurd,⁶⁴ and so as to acquire a real vision of it that is near to poetry. As well, man for Marcel

has to believe in himself, so that he is not the captive of determinisms, to believe in the other in order to truly love him, and to believe in God, so that He is not an "object" or an impersonal principle.⁶⁵ Faith in all these senses shows that to reach "being", for Marcel, the person cannot make do with speculation: "il y faut un engagement personnel".⁶⁶

Faith, in Marcel's sense here, is not first a mode of knowledge but of "being". Marcel's faith demands the recognition of a new type of intelligibility which is essentially a mystery,⁶⁷ as Marcel understands it. While objectifying thought cannot lead into the structure of reality, the faith which according to Marcel introduces man into truth is not able to be verified as science checks its hypotheses. Secondary reflection⁶⁸ plays its part here by separating from the reality, to which the person adheres by faith, all that comes from objectifying, abstraction and the scientific spirit.

PART V: The problem as opposed to the mystery

Central to the worlds of "having" and "being" is Marcel's classic distinction between a problem and a mystery. The world of "having" is characterized by man reduced to the level of objects, where the individual is seen mainly in the light of the functions⁶⁹ he can perform. Life in the world of "having" is full of problems⁷⁰ and seeks to remove from itself, as far as possible, any sense of mystery. In Marcel's eyes⁷¹ this distinction between problem and mystery is fundamental, for to eliminate mystery is to reduce life to the "tout naturel".⁷² For Marcel this distinction marks two different ways of knowing reality.

When the person approaches a thing as external to himself, as something set over against him, the thing in Marcel's

view is there for him to inspect. It does not involve the person and so begins to lead the independent life which is the feature of the problem. Marcel points⁷³ out that the very etymology of the word, derived from Greek, shows it as "thrown before", in a way similar to the derivation of the word "object" from Latin. A problem for Marcel is an investigation begun about an object which the self apprehends in an external way after the manner of a scientist and his experiment. He has to keep his own inner self out of his enquiry. The problem belongs to the world of "having", and is subject to primary reflection in Marcel's view.

A mystery on the contrary is for Marcel

"quelque chose où je me trouve engagé, et, ajouterai-je, non pas engagé partiellement, par quelque aspect déterminé et spécialisé de moi-même, mais au contraire engagé tout entier".⁷⁴

The mystery for Marcel cannot therefore be set over against the person because it involves him. An example of such a mystery would be his question: "Que suis-je?" To keep in contact with the real nature of a mystery the person cannot treat it as separate from himself; otherwise it is reduced to a problem. In Marcel's view, with mystery "la distinction de l'en moi et du devant moi perdait sa signification".⁷⁵

With the problem, for Marcel, the data given are clearly given,⁷⁶ exterior to the self. The car to be repaired, for example, stands there with its parts at the mechanic's feet. The data are in a state of disorder which the person notices and, Marcel says, he then proceeds to supply an order according to the plan he has thought up.⁷⁷ When the order is restored, the problem is resolved. The problem, for Marcel, admits of a solution because it is solvable precisely as a

problem.

On the contrary, in Marcel's view⁷⁸

"un mystère c'est un problème qui empiète sur ces propres données, qui les envahit et se dépasse par là même comme simple problème".

The mystery has depths which cannot be fathomed because the enquirer cannot separate himself from his search. A mystery does not admit of a final result as the end to all further thought. An example is the question: "What is being?" This is a question which, for Marcel, is tied to the seeker's own existence, so that he cannot cut himself off from the data he is investigating.⁷⁹

Marcel maintains that a mystery is not an unsolved problem.⁸⁰ It is not its insolubility that makes a mystery. The prevention of coronaries is not a mystery but a problem for which medical science has yet to find a solution. Nor, according to Marcel,⁸¹ does mystery mean a problem on which the mind arbitrarily places the notice "no thoroughfare". That, in Marcel's view, would be to return to the agnosticism that developed at the end of the nineteenth century. For Marcel,⁸² mystery has about it a certain "light" which is hardly that of real knowledge but, to speak metaphorically, favours the birth of knowledge, as sunlight allows a tree or flower to flourish. Marcel can say this because in his view mystery or "le méta-problématique... c'est une participation qui fonde ma réalité de sujet".⁸³

This view of mystery is in accord with Marcel's whole epistemology, which is an analysis of personal experience. Only if you share his experience can you agree fully with his approach. He adds that, in his view,⁸⁴ mystery is not a void to be filled up with knowledge, but "une plénitude"⁸⁵ ready

for investigation. He warns,⁸⁶ however, that there is no hope of tracing a line of demarcation between problem and mystery, for a mystery subjected to reflection tends inevitably to be degraded to a problem.

Marcel's appreciation of mystery⁸⁷ is linked with his view of the fundamental tie uniting the person and the enveloping reality. This link is a participation, implying that the person becomes a stranger to himself⁸⁸ in the degree he treats reality as if it were at his disposal. If he uses reality selfishly he makes of it an idol or image. If, however, he immerses himself in it he has hope of attaining knowledge of it if he treats it with reverence and wonder.⁸⁹

A further basis for the distinction between problem and mystery for Marcel is the degree of personal involvement entailed in each. When dealing with a problem, anybody can verify an object, as for example, with a scientific experiment. A mystery, however, is essentially personal to the individual mind. No one else, in Marcel's view, can verify what the individual freely believes - whether it is "being", the other or God. This implies, however, that the reasoning mind cannot know reality and share it with others by using definitions - an opinion other philosophers would dispute on the grounds that truth cannot be entirely subjective and personal to the individual.

Gallagher points out⁹⁰ a final difference in Marcel's view of a problem and a mystery. In Marcel's eyes an individual is moved to seek the answer to a problem by curiosity in search of an answer. He is faced with a puzzle which he is aware he can solve by application of techniques. The mind is master of the problem. Mystery is something different for Marcel. Here the mind is not moved by curiosity but by wonder⁹¹

and astonishment. This is linked with Marcel's view of the holy as the object of Philosophy, as we shall see shortly. Here man is motivated, according to Marcel, not by a search for information but by faith in "being" and a sentiment of reverence.⁹²

The student facing Marcel's distinction between mystery and problem may well ask: "How can a person know this distinction if as soon as he comes to know it, he immediately treats mystery as an object and so reduces it to the level of having?" Thought must deal with objects in concepts and so immediately mystery is reduced to a problem, with the result that mystery is objectified as soon as one talks about it. The attempt to discuss a mystery defeats itself.⁹³ Marcel's answer is to say that we know mystery as mystery through secondary reflection, which we have investigated already.

Footnotes to Chapter One

1. P.20.
2. Troisfontaines Tome I. P.123.
3. ibid. P.123.
4. ibid. P.124.
5. ibid. P.124. Such an outlook is the foundation of the scientific method as an approach to reality.
6. EA.I. P.25-26.
7. Troisfontaines Tome I. P.125.
8. ibid. P.125.
9. ibid. P.125.
10. ibid. P.126.
11. ibid. P.126-127.
12. ibid. P.127.
13. ibid. P.127.
14. P.20.
15. EA.I. P.170-171.
16. ibid. P.170-171. It should be noted that medieval theologians distinguished between intellect (intellectus) and reason (ratio). Intellect is the power of intuitive apprehension, reason the capacity to draw logical inferences from what is apprehended. Thus, broadly speaking, intellect is metaphysical, reason analytical.
17. ibid. P.141-142.
18. ibid. P.141-142.
19. ibid. P.170-171.
20. ibid. P.170-171.
21. ibid. P.170-171.
22. Troisfontaines Tome I. P.205.
23. Gallagher, K.T., The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel, New York. Fordham U.P., 1962. P.13. Hereafter referred to as "Gallagher".
24. ibid. P.44.
25. Troisfontaines Tome I. P.206.
26. Gallagher P.44.
27. ibid. P.44.
28. ibid. P.45.
29. ibid. P.45.
30. ibid. P.45.
31. PEA. P.62.

32. *ibid.* P.62.
33. *ibid.* P.62.
34. *ibid.* P.62.
35. *ibid.* P.63.
36. *ibid.* P.63.
37. *ibid.* P.63.
38. *ibid.* P.63.
39. *ibid.* P.64.
40. *ibid.* P.64.
41. *ibid.* P.64.
42. *ibid.* P.65.
43. *ibid.* P.65.
44. *ibid.* P.65.
45. *ibid.* P.65-66.
46. *ibid.* P.66.
47. HV. P.70.
48. ME.I. P.144.
49. *ibid.* P.144.
50. *ibid.* P.145.
51. *ibid.* P.145.
52. HC. P.76.
53. DH. P.121.
54. *ibid.* P.121.
55. *ibid.* P.122.
56. PEA. P.75.
57. *ibid.* P.75.
58. ME.I. P.33.
59. DH. P.118. Marcel here seems to be equating "recueillement" with what in theology is called "contemplation".
60. *ibid.* P.129.
61. Troisfontaines Tome I P.209.
62. *ibid.* P.209.
63. *ibid.* P.209.
64. *ibid.* P.209.
65. *ibid.* P.209. Herein lies Marcel's objection to the traditional five ways of proving God's existence.
66. *ibid.* P.209.
67. *ibid.* P.209.
68. *ibid.* P.210.
69. PEA. P.49.
70. *ibid.* P.49.

71. *ibid.* P.50.
72. *ibid.* P.50.
73. Gallagher P.31.
74. HC. P.69.
75. DH. P.111.
76. HV. P.89.
77. *ibid.* P.90.
78. PEA. P.57.
79. HV. P.90.
80. Gallagher P.37.
81. DR. P.79.
82. *ibid.* P.79.
83. EA.I. P.165.
84. DR. P.198.
85. *ibid.* P.198.
86. PEA. P.57.
87. HV. P.76.
88. *ibid.* P.76.
89. PEA. P.51.
90. P.39-40.
91. PEA. P.51.
92. Gallagher P.40.
93. ME.I. P.83.

CHAPTER TWO

HAVING

Marcel admits it is extraordinarily difficult to express the difference between "having" and "being" in conceptual form, despite the fact that such a distinction is basic to his philosophy. If something is had, however, it possesses an ability to exist by itself, an "extériorité"² in relation to the possessor. Generally speaking, Marcel maintains, one possesses things or what can be treated as a thing, so that the degree to which something is treated as an object separate from the possessor and others of its kind is the measure of the presence of "having". In the strict sense of "having", the person can only have something that possesses an existence which is independent of him, so that what he has is added to him. Moreover, Marcel affirms, the fact of being possessed by a certain person is added to the qualities and properties of the thing possessed. It seems, however, that this added quality is not real but relational, existing more in the person's attitude than in the thing owned. A thing, that is, does not change its nature because it belongs to a particular person.

"Having", in Marcel's view, also implies that the possessor is able to dispose of what he has within certain limits. This means that the owner is considered as a being gifted with abilities or potentialities, so that he can transmit only what he has. This seems true if we consider, for example, the case of money. I can dispose of it as I please because I have the ability to do so. Marcel sums this up by saying "La caractéristique de l'avoir, c'est d'être exposable".³

Things become "exposable" in Marcel's view because man

learns to dominate and conquer them, treating them as his instruments. This causes the viewer to lose the sense he might possess of any underlying unity in what he sees. Marcel can, therefore, affirm "l'avoir c'est en réalité la multiplicité".⁴

In Marcel's terms, lying beneath "having" is the failure to perceive a unity within the world, so that the individual is overwhelmed by the sheer mass and disorder of things. This leads Marcel to the conclusion that

"c'est toujours par l'avoir que je donne prise à la souffrance ... Un être totalement simplifié, c'est-à-dire entièrement un, ne saurait être sujet au pâtir".⁵

"Having", therefore, in Marcel's terms, indicates that the individual in its grip is not a unified being and this deficiency leaves him open to suffering. He is neither integrated within himself nor does he possess a sense of unity with the surrounding world. "Having", according to Marcel, allows suffering to reach the individual who is therefore exposed to the multiplicity of things. He has, as a consequence, a sense of being overcome by the external world as Sartre's Roquentin was upset by the contingency of reality in La Nausée. Simplification in Marcel's view, on the other hand, can only be the opposite movement of a sense of the underlying unity of things, a mystical view whereby reality shares in "being", a concept that will become clearer in Chapter Three.

"Having" increases, it seems, according to the degree a person seeks to dominate things, treating them as objects for his use, wielding power over them by his attitude to them. Thus, for Marcel, "having" implies an increasing sense of the separateness of the dominating self and a growing distinction between the self and reality, and between things themselves.

"Having", in Marcel's eyes, is the world of human failure in that it is closed to "being". The human condition is such that man is menaced by the obscuring tendency of objects and by the sphere of the "tout naturel".⁶ By the wholly natural Marcel means the world considered apart from "mystery", where man has tried to eliminate this "mystery", a world where all is reduced to the level of function. Into the facts of man's existence, which Marcel exemplifies as birth, love and death, the individual can bring to bear

"cette catégorie psychologique et pseudo-scientifique du tout naturel".⁷

The wholly natural is therefore for Marcel a way of viewing the world which he says is the residue of a degraded rationalism⁸ for which cause explains effect by giving a full account of it. It is a category based on primary reflection which it takes to an extreme, eliminating mystery⁹ from the world and wonder from man.

In the world of "having", where the category of the wholly natural flourishes, Marcel sees the enemy of "being". Man caught in the grip of "having" has around him "une carapace qui nous environne et que nous avons nous-mêmes sécrétée".¹⁰ It is a shell which arises from man's categorizing and defining mind, and impedes his access to "being", which in Marcel's terms can only be reached by piercing through this shell. Marcel equates¹¹ this penetration with the Gospel's command to become as "little children"¹² in the approach to the divine. In Marcel's view, this piercing is possible only intermittently and through heroic¹³ effort because man always has to struggle against the obscuring force of the objective thing itself.

Because the individual can be overwhelmed by the shell of "having" and the sense of multiplicity, Marcel can therefore

say that what a man has threatens him. "Nos possessions nous dévorent".¹⁴ While this may seem a trite statement, especially if we take the literal case of a miser eaten up by avarice, it needs interpretation if we are to see it as Marcel means it. He goes on to distinguish between different types of possessions. Those that are inert¹⁵ in our hands are indeed liable to destroy us - money or ideas are good examples. The more the person treats his ideas as something belonging to him and which he is proud of, the more they will tend by their inertia before him, or equivalently, his inertia before them, to have ascendancy over him. This is the cause of fanaticism and dogmatism in all forms, according to Marcel. The individual is dominated by his ideas.

On the other hand, Marcel declares, the person is not threatened by possessions he has freedom with, control over, or use of for creative purposes.¹⁶ According to the degree he uses it in a vital or active way, to that extent a possession cannot dominate the man. Marcel gives as an example things that form the perpetual raw material¹⁷ of a personal creation - the garden of someone tending it, a farm, a piano or violin of a musician, or a scientist's laboratory. Obviously Marcel does not mean that the mere use of a violin implies that "having" is no longer present. In the cases he gives he means that "having" is overcome the more the land or instrument is used in a vital and creative way as an expression of the self. In these latter cases he maintains

"L'avoir tend non plus à s'anéantir, mais à se sublimer, à se transmuier en être."¹⁸

By the use of a thing for vital and creative purposes, "having" is therefore not annihilated, according to Marcel, but overcome in a process of sublimation. The person, that is,

uses the thing in such a way as not to blot out "having" completely but to reduce its power over him as he moves to use something creatively. This means the possibility of "having" remains in the use of something but it is incorporated in a higher, more free use of the thing on the level of "being".

Furthermore, the "having" type of possession, as mere instrument, tends, Marcel says

"à me supprimer, moi qui les possède".¹⁹

This is what he means when he says we can be devoured by the use of a thing. The individual, a miser for example, can clearly be so obsessed with his possessions that they dominate him, destroying his freedom and undermining what makes him a person. The same applies, in Marcel's view, to the dogmatist or fanatic. He can say, therefore

"Il y a un sens où il est vrai de dire que posséder, c'est être possédé, précisément parce que la possession ne va pas sans une anxiété secrète qui n'est pas d'une nature fondamentalement différente, me semble-t-il, que celle que l'on rencontre chez l'égoïste au sens plein, au sens de Meredith".²⁰

The parallel with "The Egoist" is obvious since, in each case, the owner holds on so tightly to the thing possessed, that he is not free in its regard and is prey to an anxiety that he may lose it.

Moreover, Marcel affirms that a person can be dominated by "having" merely in desiring and coveting a thing.

"Désirer c'est en quelque manière avoir en n'ayant pas".²¹

Thus the individual is reduced to the level of "having" by his greed, so that in Marcel's view, he suffers from his desire just as much as if he were to feel his actual possession of a thing threatened by another.

In the area of "having", according to Marcel, there is a relationship between management and autonomy. The person can say: "I want to look after my own affairs" - such is the key formula of autonomy. "Having", in Marcel's view, implies a certain domain, circumscribed in space and time, to which the individual can reduce everything he is interested in. Within this province he can seek to manipulate, not only his goods and money, but everything he can reduce to the "having" level. As the person, however, transcends "having" he cannot

"en aucun sens parler de gestion, soit par autrui, soit par moi-même, ni, par suite, d'autonomie".²²

Marcel is here using "autonomy", not in the sense of a person being truly free, but to mean someone cut off from the network of human relationships and using things selfishly. In his opinion, progress in "being" is marked by a transcendence of "having", autonomy in the selfish sense and manipulation.

There is in consequence a paradox in Marcel's view of "having". On the one hand, "having" means that an individual treats things as at his pleasure, dominating and classifying them objectively as distinct from himself, and on the other hand, things possessed in a "having" way dominate the owner. As Marcel presents it, the tension between the self and the possessed is the very rhythm of the sphere of "having". This can be true whatever is possessed, whether it be money, ideas or one's self.

Marcel, therefore, holds³³ that the dogmatist is of all men the most to be feared because he makes himself the slave of his ideas which tyrannize him. The true thinker, in Marcel's view, is always on guard against petrification of his thought. He should maintain himself in a creative state where-

by his thought is at every moment revitalized by contact with experience and the thought of others.

So far we have spoken of "having" in regard to things. Marcel, however, also thinks that "having" enters the sphere of man's personal relationships. Man can treat his fellows as things, reducing them to the "having" level. This is obvious and not at all distinctive to Marcel. He believes that modern technological society, with its tendency to turn life into a sort of slavery, reduces man to the level of his functions.²⁴ The clerk who writes his information on someone's identity card - name, age, height, profession and address - does not for Marcel register the person's "being". In this sense the person in Marcel's view is more than what he has.

Finally, the individual dominated by "having" is no person at all in Marcel's estimate, but a being dominated by possessions and in an enslaved state. His passage to "being", however, marks his growth as a person for Marcel.

Footnotes to Chapter Two

1. JM P.301.
2. *ibid.* P.301.
3. EA.I. P.202.
4. *ibid.* P.107.
5. *ibid.* P.107.
6. PEA. P.50.
7. *ibid.* P.50.
8. *ibid.* P.50.
9. *ibid.* P.50.
10. EA.I. P.140.
11. *ibid.* P.140.
12. Matthew 18/3
13. EA.I. P.140.
14. *ibid.* P.208.
15. *ibid.* P.208.
16. *ibid.* P.208.
17. *ibid.* P.208.
18. *ibid.* P.208.
19. *ibid.* P.207.
20. DH.P. 138.
21. EA.I. P.204.
22. *ibid.* P.165.
23. *ibid.* P.240-242.
24. PEA. P.47.

CHAPTER THREE

BEING

Radically opposed to the world of "having" is Marcel's world of "being" which is found¹ the more "having" diminishes. Marcel admits that "being" is a notion difficult to define and he gives only the following clues. "Being" is what resists or would² resist an exhaustive analysis directed at the data of experience to reduce them step by step to elements increasingly deprived of intrinsic meaning.³

Even at this early stage we can see Marcel's possible weakness or inability to define adequately what he means by "being". To say that "being" is what resists analysis is really to define by negation, a method traditionally used of the divine by philosophers. Its application to a metaphysical discussion of "being" appears doubtfully valid. It is to refuse definition to a concept central to Marcel's metaphysics and to call down the curse of vagueness upon the whole of his thought. Such a negative definition is, however, in accord with Marcel's epistemology and his reverence before the "méta-problématique". He has no wish to impose upon reality. The reader, however, would prefer a more precise definition of "being".

Marcel, however, has faith in the intelligibility of the world and speaks of an "exigence ontologique"⁴ which corresponds not to a vague aspiration or simple desire towards "being", but to an impetus from the depths of reality. He also describes this "exigence" as a call to the person, though he leaves it to the reader to decide what it is a call from. This "exigence ontologique" he explains by saying "il faut qu'il y ait - ou il faudrait qu'il y eût-de l'être".⁵ By this

key sentence Marcel means that if man is not to characterize the world as absurd, there must be "being". By "absurd", Marcel goes on to say, he is speaking of a world in which everything would be reduced to a game of successive and inconsistent appearances⁶ or to a world which in Shakespeare's words is "a tale told by an idiot".

But we may ask in desperation what does "being" mean for Marcel? He says⁷ it is not a property since it can be seen as precisely what makes possible the existence of any property. Yet Marcel declares⁸ it is not anterior to the properties of a thing. In his view it would be wrong to speak of "being" as existing nakedly before it is clothed with the properties of a thing.

"Being", in Marcel's opinion, is a participation⁹ in reality which man can only affirm. At the heart of this affirmation of "being" there is a concrete assurance stemming from the necessity of "being". In no way, Marcel thinks, does this affirmation generate the reality of what it affirms. The formula is "je l'affirme parce que cela est".¹⁰ The more a person rises to and shares in this reality, the less it can be treated, in Marcel's view, as an object of scientific investigation. It cannot be defined. If someone, Marcel thinks, adopts the attitude that "being" can be clearly distinguished, at that very moment he ceases to attain it as reality, it hides from him and he is in the presence of a ghost.¹¹ This tallies with Marcel's twofold reflection and their respective capabilities. In his view, to seek to analyse "being" is

"caractériser, c'est une certaine façon de posséder, de prétendre posséder l'impossédable; c'est constituer une petite effigie abstraite, d'une réalité qui ne se prête à ces jeux, à ces simulations fallacieuses que de la façon la plus superfi-

cielle; et s'y prête dans la mesure où nous nous retranchons de cette réalité".¹²

Rather than characterizing "being", Marcel holds that the person experiences it. To be is to participate in "being". A person cannot have an isolated¹³ experience of "being", nor is there such a thing as a purely private self. Gallagher writes: "The ego given in experience is a being - by - participation".¹⁴ The self for Marcel cannot be divorced from that in which it participates, for participation alone allows there to be a self.¹⁵ Nor can "l'exigence ontologique" be recognized by a solitary ego but only by a subject - in - communion.¹⁶ Marcel maintains in a preface to Gallagher's work written in English: "We do not belong to ourselves: this is certainly the sum and substance, if not of wisdom, at least of any spirituality worthy of the name".¹⁷

"Being" as a reality for Marcel is unable to be characterized and yet is. It is given to the person in what he calls "présence". Wherever there is "being" there is "présence", according to Marcel. An object, on the other hand, is an effigy,¹⁸ built up by a disengagement from the immediate sense of "présence", and rather a mode of absence belonging to "having". An objectified world is for Marcel a world in which "being" has diminished and "having" increases.

Modern man for Marcel¹⁹ suffers from the grip of "having" in which his sense of the need to be "s'exténue".²⁰ Marcel thinks that this "exigence ontologique" can be reduced to silence only by an arbitrary and dictatorial act which mutilates the spiritual life at its very root.²¹ He does not specify what this "act" is exactly, but it would seem to belong to the category of "having", based on primary reflection, and reflected in modern man's technology. "Being" is,

therefore, in Marcel's view, at the core of man's spiritual life, at the heart of what makes him a person. Man, as Marcel sees him, is in a state of struggle between the two worlds of "being" and "having", torn asunder by "the imposition of the rationalistic side of the human self. As a discursive reasoner, as one who indulges in primary reflection, man is above all a manipulator and a planner; but only what is possessed can be manipulated, and therefore the vision of modern civilization does not extend beyond man as a "haver" ".²²

"Being" in Marcel's eyes is not the same as a thing's existence. Existence is not a modality of "being"²³ - that would be, Marcel believes, a rudimentary idea that is even philosophically untenable. Such an affirmation would imply that "being" is a genus, which for Marcel is philosophically false. The person can confidently assert his existence but his "being", for Marcel, is not so much asserted as accepted humbly as a gift.²⁴ Gallagher writes: "Being is the eternal dimension of my existential situation ... I can transform my existential situation into a vehicle for "being" if I accept it in the sign of the eternal".²⁵ Man's existence, in Marcel's view, shows its nature when its etymology is investigated, for "exister, c'est émerger, c'est surgir".²⁶ Existence arises, able to be declared as distinct from others, whereas a person's "being" can only be guessed at by "recueillement".

Nor, in Marcel's eyes, is a man's "being" the same as his life.²⁷ Life has been given to the person so that he is before he lives. Life is not something a person can have and administer. For Marcel, the self is "not reducible to its objective manifestations. The reality of the self lies beyond its finite and material expression. It is precisely here that there looms up the threat of a betrayal, for there is a constant temptation

facing man to reduce his "being" to its overt manifestation".²⁸

Marcel declares that there is only what he calls "salvation"²⁹ for the intelligence and the soul in distinguishing between a person's soul and his life, a distinction he calls mysterious, yet a mystery which is paradoxically a source of light. (We have illustrated here Marcel's tendency to indulge in paradox which some philosophers might find meaningless, while others who share Marcel's experience can identify with him.)

There are for Marcel³⁰ two consequences of saying a person's "being" is not to be confused with his life. The first is that his life has been given to him and he is therefore humanly impenetrable. By this Marcel is indicating the mystery of a person's "being". The second consequence for Marcel³¹ is that a person's "being" is in some way threatened from the first moment he comes to exist and has to be saved, as we shall see later.

Marcel comes close to a description of "being" when he speaks of living. Living implies for us, he declares, that beneath it there is

"une sorte d'Atlantide, métaphysique, inexplorable par définition, mais dont la présence en réalité confère à notre expérience son volume, sa valeur, sa mystérieuse densité".³² This sentence conveys Marcel's intuition of "being" - it can only be glimpsed, it cannot be pinned down, yet it is a "présence" which conveys substance to our persons.

On reading Marcel's discussion of "being", it is clear that "being" for him has many religious connotations. This may lead us to suspect that Marcel seems to view God in the guise of "being". We shall discuss this question under the following headings.

1. Man is the shepherd of "being".

Man, Marcel declares "est le berger de l'être".³³ This is to attribute to him a certain ontological responsibility. This in Marcel's view would have no meaning if "being" was conceived as endowed with an existence in itself after the fashion of a nature. Nor is it a question, in Marcel's opinion, of reducing "being" to "modalités du sujet pensant",³⁴ after the style of a type of idealism. "Shepherdhood" implies that the philosopher must steer a channel between these two views of "being".

Marcel has borrowed this phrase "Man is the shepherd of being" from Heidegger.³⁵ The former does not mean it to be interpreted in any functional sense. It would be absurd, according to Marcel, to say that man's function is to guard "being" as one guards a flock. The responsibility spoken of is "supra-fonctionnel",³⁶ in the way a person is responsible for his children. Marcel maintains that the father has to care for them in a way different from the nurse to whom he entrusts them. On a functional level each has the same duty but from the spiritual point of view there is a large difference in responsibility because the father is "consubstantiel"³⁷ with his children, whereas the nurse is not. In the same way, according to Marcel, "being" is the responsibility of man who possesses it in such a way that it should flourish within him.

In the same sense of consubstantiality, Marcel holds that man is of one flesh³⁸ with those who have introduced him into "being". There is a mystery (in the Marcellian sense) uniting a person with his forebears, a mystery that is obscure. He can trace his genealogy but he cannot fully penetrate, Marcel thinks, the mystery surrounding his origins. This is in accord with Marcel's idea³⁹ that the more a person participates in "being", the less he knows what he participates in according to

primary reflection.

2. Selfishness is the bane of man's being.

This idea, common to religious teaching, forms a theme for Marcel. He maintains paradoxically⁴⁰ that the person exists less in so far as it is exclusively himself that exists and, in an opposite way, that the person exists more to the degree he forces himself from egotism. Here Marcel is distinguishing the self into a higher and lower level, based, it seems, on secondary and primary reflection respectively. He goes on to maintain it is philosophically absurd to say "mon existence se présente comme un moyen d'accéder à mon être".⁴¹ The reason he gives is that to say "mon être" rings suspiciously in the ear of a "spirituel" or a metaphysician. "Being" cannot be possessed like that for oneself. It eludes the possession which leads to objectification.

3. The Person incarnating "Being".

Marcel thinks⁴² that the person only realizes himself in the act by which he incarnates himself - in a work of literature, in an action or in the totality of a life. Yet at the same time, Marcel holds, it is of the person's essence never to be definitively fixed in this particular incarnation. The reason is that, for Marcel,⁴³ the person participates in the inexhaustible plenitude of "being" from which he comes. This explains why, according to Marcel, it is impossible to think of the person without thinking at the same time of what is beyond him,

"une réalité supra-personnelle qui préside à toutes ses initiatives, qui est à la fois son principe et sa fin".⁴⁴

"Being" then for Marcel is like a Platonic ideal form. It is the creative source of all that exists and acts; it is

the end to which all tends. It is, however, more real than a Platonic form in Marcel's view. The person must incarnate himself if he is not to lose himself in abstraction.

4. The Identity of "Being" and Truth.

For Marcel, "Being" and Truth are identical⁴⁵ since "Being" is reality. The Truth he means is not truth in the factual sense discovered by science but Truth which is transcendent like "being".

5. "Being" as transcendent.

Marcel is of the view that "being" is "une unité supra-rationnelle au-delà des images, des mots et des concepts".⁴⁶ Like the divine, "being" for Marcel is beyond anthropomorphic forms as well as the power of primary reflection.

6. "Being" is a mystery.

Like the divine, "being" in Marcel's opinion⁴⁷ must always remain a mystery which resists resolution. Man can only participate in "being", not understand or analyse it.

7. The conditions for saying: "Je suis".

For Marcel, this declaration is not to be made in a presumptuous⁴⁸ or defiant tone but is to be said in a manner based at the same time on humility, fear, grace and wonder, qualities traditionally used before the divine. Humility⁴⁹ is needed, according to Marcel, because "being" can only be granted to us, and it is a gross illusion, he says, to believe that the person can confer it on himself. Humility is, therefore, man's recognition of his poverty before "being". Man also needs fear, Marcel affirms,⁵⁰ because he cannot even be sure that he may not render himself so unworthy of this gift of "being" that he would be condemned to lose it if grace did

not come to his aid. Finally, man before "being", according to Marcel, needs wonder because this gift bears with it light because it is light. This last statement can only mean something if the reader shares Marcel's experience of "being", or accepts on faith what he claims to experience.

8. "Being" is best witnessed to by the saint.

As has been seen, "having", according to Marcel, is marked by being exposable and deals with things exterior to the person. As Marcel sees it, a belief or conviction, whether it be moral, religious or political,⁵¹ can be consubstantial with the person "comme faisant corps avec moi-même".⁵² Here, in Marcel's view, lies one way of passing from "having" to "being". A belief can become exterior to the person when it detaches itself from⁵³ him, so "qu'elle se dévitalise ou qu'elle se déflore, qu'elle se dessèche".⁵⁴ By this Marcel seems to mean that the belief has perhaps not penetrated the believer. It is not as deeply-rooted in him or as intimately held as the individual is ready to think before he tries to propose it to others. It is the attempt, in Marcel's eyes, to speak of it to others that reveals the belief as "exposable" and as "un feuillage caduc".⁵⁵

Belief, in Marcel's view, can, however, be held in the strong sense of the word, which means that it can only be attested to or witnessed to. It is here precisely, he thinks, that "having" seems to pass really to "being".⁵⁶ This is only true, according to Marcel, of the person "qui vit totalement, qui rayonne sa croyance, c'est-à-dire avant tout chez le saint".⁵⁷

In the case of the ordinary believer who imperfectly tries to incarnate his faith, his belief, in Marcel's eyes, is covered over by a growth of opinions received from others, pre-

judices and habitual ways of thinking, about which one can only say that he has them.⁵⁸ Marcel's view is that we can never pin down precisely what we believe,⁵⁹ but what he calls men's "knowing consciousness"⁶⁰ contains all the elements which are liable to be exposed in so far as they remain exterior to the person. This "knowing consciousness" seems to link with Marcel's "primary reflection" and can be accepted along with it.

9. "Being" and Sainthood.

Marcel sets out what he means by sainthood.⁶¹ In his view it is not a quality or moral disposition in the properly rational sense of the word. By this Marcel is referring to the source of that type of quality, primary reflection. He places sainthood rather on the level of ontology because he thinks the saint is

"celui qui a accédé à un mode de l'être excluant la séparation courante entre l'homme et la nature".⁶²

Again, Marcel presents the reader with his own view of the object of philosophy. For him the saint and the metaphysician are dealing with realities in the same sphere of "being". As Marcel sees it, "being" for the saint means there is no separation between man and nature into different categories, a view common to mystics who base their insight into reality on an all-inclusive love. Marcel's view of the saint appears to belong within this tradition of mysticism. It is in this context that he can speak of "multiplicité"⁶³ as linked with the world of "having". Multiplicity, in his mind, must not be eluded but transcended to attain "being". Marcel states elsewhere⁶⁴ that there is a rigorous parallel or analogical correspondence between progress in "being" and progress in sanctity.

Marcel also holds⁶⁵ that there is a hidden identity between the road to sanctity and the way leading the metaphysician to affirm "being". Indeed Marcel declares that there is only one way for both in the context of what he calls "une philosophie concrète".⁶⁶

10. Attaining "Being"

In Marcel's opinion "l'être nous est immédiatement présent, mais nous ne lui sommes pas immédiatement présents".⁶⁷ Marcel's reason for saying this lies in his view that man can be blind to "being". He adopts the thesis, which he calls paradoxical,⁶⁸ according to which it is always the ego which puts shadow over itself, the opaqueness coming from that which the ego interposes between the I and the other. This leads, in his view, to the obscure view we have of the world. He maintains⁶⁹ that there is no intrinsic obscurity about the world but any obscurity there stems from the person's obscurity for himself. This links with the common religious idea of the undeveloped individual as living in illusion, blind to God, enveloped in his superficial self.

Man, in Marcel's opinion, has to struggle to attain the depths⁷⁰ of "being". According to Marcel there is at the centre of reality or human destiny "un inépuisable concret"⁷¹ in the knowledge of which a person does not progress in stages like the links of a chain as he does in studying any discipline. Each person can only attain this inexhaustible source "avec le plus intact, avec le plus vierge de lui-même".⁷² Experience, according to Marcel, shows that these "virginal parts" of the self are often covered over with a heap of silt and scoria,⁷³ which can only be removed by a long and painful purification or asceticism. These "virginal parts" of the person are presumably man's powers of secondary reflection and

faith in Marcel's sense.

Another obstacle to attainment of "being" and even to making the person feel the quest for "being" is illusory is to be found, in Marcel's view, in the notion of alienation on which Hegel and then Marx put so much stress.⁷⁴ The idea of alienation is, for Marcel, closely linked to the world of "having", as has been seen.

In Marcel's mind, there is "being" in as much as a person is rooted in the ontological mystery, as he calls it.⁷⁵ This means an individual has to be viewed as part of his situation where he encounters "being". The opposite is man abstracted⁷⁶ from his ambience, an abstraction which owes its life to what Marcel calls "the pure problematic".⁷⁷

Man, in Marcel's eyes, also runs the danger of "la déficience ontologique",⁷⁸ which, he maintains, is proper to "la créature déchue".⁷⁹ By this religious term Marcel means man in the grip of "having" or at least man prone to fall into its grip. He defines this ontological deficiency as an inertia⁸⁰ which tends to become what he calls a negative activity. Marcel calls this a negative activity because it makes possible certain autonomous and subordinate disciplines, each of which he thinks⁸¹ a danger for the unity of "being". The danger, as Marcel sees it, is that each autonomous sphere tends to absorb "being". The only alternative route back to "being" is for each autonomous activity, discipline or function to find its counterweight

"dans les activités centrales par lesquelles l'homme se remet lui-même en présence du mystère qui le fonde et hors duquel il n'est que néant:

la religion, l'art, la métaphysique".⁸²

Religion, art and metaphysics are, therefore, for Marcel

disciplines which lead a person on the road to "being" and provide a healthy balance, in his view, to autonomous disciplines, which presumably are for him the sciences. Marcel does not specify what he means by an autonomous and subordinate discipline but since science is linked, in his view, to primary reflection, it is fair to say he is referring to empirical disciplines. In this sense, we can understand why he calls them "negative activity", since they lead away from "being".

11. "Being" as fullness.

In Marcel's view,⁸³ salvation, which presumably is the state of "being", "ne peut être que dans la plénitude". He speaks of the same thing in religious terms when he refers to "le plérôme qui est l'être". "Being" is a state of fullness, maturity, ripeness, in Marcel's opinion.

12. "Being" and creation.

"Being", for Marcel, is especially to be found in creation, which links with his view of the role of the artist⁸⁴ as one who incarnates "being" in himself and his work. Everywhere there is creation, he maintains,⁸⁵ "having" is transcended or evaporated in the very heart of this creation. There the duality of the possessor and possessed is done away with in the living reality of creation. In his opinion "Aussitôt qu'il y a création, à quelque degré que ce soit, nous sommes dans l'être".⁸⁶

He writes in the foreword to Gallagher⁸⁷: "There is doubtless no sense in using the word "being" except where creation, in some form or other, is in view". Creation and "being" are, therefore, in Marcel's view intimately linked. The creativity of "being" joins with the fullness we have seen to characterize it. "Being" creates the self and other as a

free gift. So "being" is not a state of passivity or atrophy, in Marcel's opinion, but dynamic and open. It is linked with "recueillement", an active inward state, and with communion with others in love.

13. "Being" and the Divine.

Clearly, "being", in Marcel's view, is marked by all the qualities of the Divine. "Being" for Marcel is full, creative, uncharacterizable, unpossessable, necessary, part of man and attained by purification from self-centredness by the saint, artist or metaphysician. Is being Divine, in his view?

Marcel speaks of having "ce sens sacré de l'être, cette conviction que l'être est une réalité sacrale."⁸⁸ "Being" is clearly linked with God, it is a sacred thing, but is it Divine? In one passage in "Etre et Avoir"⁸⁹ he writes of the attributes of God. In the very next sentence, in the same context, he speaks of "being" (marked by a capital "Etre"), which he says is the more uncharacterizable the more it is "Being". By "uncharacterizable" Marcel explains that he means it is unpossessable and transcendant, above, that is, the world of "having". Given that, he states that in his view the traditional attributes of God merely express in a most inadequate language the fact that "L'Etre absolu"⁹⁰ is completely "réfractaire" to expressions which only attain or speak of a "Moins-être",⁹¹ that is of an object before which we place ourselves. As the person reduces himself in some way to its measure, so he reduces it to his stature. Then in the very next sentence Marcel goes on to hold⁹² that God can only be seen as a given, as a "Présence" glimpsed in adoration. Every idea we form of Him is only an abstract expression, an intellectualization of this "présence". God, like "being", for Marcel, can not be attained therefore by primary reflection.

This language implies that, in Marcel's view, "being" seems to be a continuum which extends from *Etre Absolu*, where there is "présence absolue", "un toi absolu",⁹³ all the way down the scale to the "being" in which man shares and which creates him. It is in this sense that Marcel can speak of "being" as a "sacral" reality.

Perhaps it would be best to speak of "Being" as divine when analysing Marcel's notion of God and "Being". The divine is what "being" and God share, though Marcel never says this. "God" is a term which is marked by limitations of association with father figures, proofs for His existence, which make an intellectual abstraction of Him, and words, which speak of Him too easily in anthropomorphic terms.

The only passage⁹⁴ where Marcel expressly speaks of God and "being" shows what lies behind his thought. A large number of past metaphysicians, and among them even the most famous, seem to encourage, in Marcel's view, the identification of God and being. He himself maintains that in principle this identification should not be made. "Being" as "being", even if it can be thought or conceptualized, should not be identified with what the believing consciousness designates by the name of God. In Marcel's opinion, it should be maintained with the greatest possible clarity that "c'est le témoignage de la conscience croyante qui peut seul décider ce qui peut ou non être regardé comme Dieu".⁹⁵

This is in tune with Marcel's philosophy of the mind, that "being" can only be attained by secondary reflection, that faith plays its role in his metaphysics and primary reflection cannot attain the depth of reality. There is a vagueness at the core of Marcel's "being", which man's rationality seeks to penetrate but before which the philosopher's sense of mystery

can only bow down. This attitude to mystery is acceptable, provided we concur with Marcel's epistemology. His refusal actually to say that "Being" equals God can irk the reader, but this refusal is consistent with his whole philosophy which aims at concrete reality and participation. In Marcel's view "being" and God slip away from between "mains sacrilèges"⁹⁶ if the philosopher seeks to manipulate ideas. This attempt would then end up by destroying the very nature of "being" and God as concrete, unpossessable and known only as a presence.

Footnotes to Chapter Three

1. PEA. P.50.
2. ibid. P.52.
3. ibid. P.52. Marcel gives as an example of this reduction the theoretical works of Freud.
4. ibid. P.51.
5. ibid. P.51.
6. ibid. P.51.
7. ME.II P.23.
8. ibid. P.23.
9. RI. P.33.
10. EA.I. P.203.
11. ibid. P.212.
12. ibid. P.213.
13. Gallagher P.XI.
14. ibid. P.XI.
15. ibid. P.XI.
16. ibid. P.X.
17. ibid. P.XIV.
18. EA.I. P.213.
19. PEA. P.50.
20. ibid. P.50.
21. ibid. P.53.
22. Gallagher P.56.
23. ME.II. P.31.
24. ibid. P.33.
25. P.62.
26. ME.II.P.33.
27. EA.II. P.43.
28. Gallagher P.63.
29. EA.II. P.43.
30. ibid. P.44.
31. ibid. P.44.
32. DR. P.124.
33. HP. P.50.
34. ibid. P.50.
35. ibid. P.51.
36. ibid. P.51.
37. ibid. P.51.
38. HV. P.93.

39. DR. P.80.
40. ME.II. P.36.
41. ibid. P.36.
42. HV. P.31.
43. ibid. P.31.
44. ibid. P.31.
45. PI. P.15.
46. DH. P.114.
47. PSLT. P.25.
48. ME.II. P.34.
49. ibid. P.34.
50. ibid. P.34.
51. DH. P.133.
52. ibid. P.133.
53. ibid. P.133.
54. ibid. P.134.
55. ibid. P.134.
56. ibid. P.134.
57. ibid. P.134.
58. ibid. P.134.
59. ibid. P.134.
60. ibid. P.134.
61. PU. P.171.
62. ibid. P.171.
63. EA.I. P.107.
64. Troisfontaines Tome I. P.14.
65. EA.I. P.105.
66. Troisfontaines Tome I. P.14.
67. ibid. P.14.
68. DR. P.91.
69. ibid. P.91.
70. ibid. P.91.
71. ibid. P.91.
72. ibid. P.91.
73. ibid. P.91.
74. ibid. P.129.
75. EA.I. P.152.
76. ibid. P.152.
77. ibid. P.152.
78. ibid. P.219-220.
79. ibid. P.220.
80. ibid. P.220.

81. *ibid.* P.220.
82. *ibid.* P.220.
83. *ibid.* P.107.
84. DR. P.124.
85. EA.I. P.208.
86. *ibid.* P.188.
87. P.XIII.
88. PR. P.100.
89. EA.I. P.213.
90. *ibid.* P.213.
91. *ibid.* P.214.
92. *ibid.* P.214.
93. ME.I. P.167.
94. ME.II. P.8.
95. *ibid.* P.8.
96. EA.I. P.214.

CHAPTER FOUR

PERSONAL SPIRITUAL GROWTH

PART I: The Meaning of Personal Spiritual Growth.

The term "personal spiritual growth" in no way refers to dogma or church. It is a question rather of investigating Marcel's view of the development of a person's mind, heart and soul in relation to himself and to the Other, God and man. We shall study in this chapter Marcel's ideas about the manner and effects of this growth and the obstacles he sees to its progress.

"Being", in Marcel's opinion, is to be found in participation with others. A person grows in this sharing which is at the root of what Marcel calls "la vie spirituelle",¹ a life which is constantly threatened as man is menaced by reduction to the categories of "having". "La vie spirituelle" is man's progressive attainment of "being" and his freeing himself from "having".

In Marcel's view, a person attains "being" or spiritual reality by passing from the order of "having" as fully as possible. He maintains

"J'appartiens d'abord en fait à ce que j'ai. Seulement tout le sens de l'évolution spirituelle consiste à me faire prendre conscience d'une appartenance opposée: appartenance à ce que je suis, appartenance ontologique".²

Man, according to Marcel, lives in a sort of no-man's-land between "being" and "non-being", and his spiritual development demands that he responds to the call to be, to belong to what he is. Such, in Marcel's opinion, is literally man's vocation.³

PART II: The Salvation of the Soul

Marcel writes in his Journal Métaphysique⁴:

"Quelque chose est mis en péril dès le moment où j'existe, mais peut aussi être sauvé et ne sera même qu'à condition d'avoir été sauvé. Cette réalité est mon âme".

What does Marcel mean by "soul"? He declares⁵ that a person's soul and life are distinct in a mysterious way. A person is before he lives, according to Marcel. He thinks⁶ man has a sense of duality between what he is as living and the secret reality of the soul which has been given to him. Marcel admits,⁷ however, that he is prepared to identify a person's soul with his "being". None the less, he thinks man should be wary of speaking of "my soul" since this phrase can imply the individual is talking of a possession which must be safeguarded and developed.⁸ This opinion is quite in accord with Marcel's view of "having" as opposed to man's spiritual enhancement. According to Marcel,⁹ speaking of "my soul" is advantageous for elementary religious pedagogy but it has the inherent danger of leading to a sort of "autolâtrie"¹⁰ which has nothing to do with a religion worthy of the name and is even its perversion. If the individual considers his soul as

"une perle à retirer des profondeurs, comme une statue à dégager, comme un jardin à cultiver ... - dans toutes ces perspectives je risque de méconnaître les droits supérieurs de l'inter-subjectivité ou, en un langage plus simple et plus conventionnel - de pécher contre l'amour".¹¹

For Marcel, therefore, there is no such thing as salvation for the individual considered "au sens privatif et atomique de ce mot".¹² The spiritual life, he thinks, is not to be reduced to a question of which techniques will best assure the individual of a place in "heaven".

We shall consider in the next chapter the contribution of love to the person's "being" according to Marcel, but we can see that while he understands "being" as identical with the soul there is always¹³ a gap between a person's self and his "being" which he cannot hope to fill up in this life. Marcel quotes with approval an important text taken from "Dialogue avec André Gide" by Charles Du Bos. Gide speaks about¹⁴

"une foi qui même au sein de l'incrédulité religieuse n'a jamais été ébranlée: la foi en l'existence de l'âme d'une part, et de l'autre du constant survol de cette âme par rapport à tous les états et à toutes les manifestations de moi, le sentiment si mystérieux de la présence et de la distance toute ensemble de l'âme à chaque heure de notre vie, voilà ce qui ne me quitte jamais".

Marcel declares¹⁵ he approves particularly of the placing together here of "présence" and "distance" in describing the person's relationship with his soul. Such a paradox is understandable given Marcel's view of the essential mystery of "being" in which man participates. He would, however, be accused of vagueness by some philosophers who would seek a clearer picture of the person's soul, its possible functions and faculties. Moreover, Marcel changes his view of the soul within his Journal Métaphysique.¹⁶ At the start he differentiates between "l'âme" as the initial subject of growth, as the chrysalis of "being" on the existential level, while "l'esprit" is the object of the person's vocation to be on the ontological level. The former belongs to nature, he maintains, while the latter relates to grace. Later in his book Marcel reserves "l'âme" for the final state of man's resemblance to God.

Ten years before his baptism, Marcel speaks¹⁷ of "l'âme" as the human being in as much as he resembles God who is con-

sciousness and love. In other words, "l'âme" is man's capacity for "being". In Marcel's view, the person's "being" is threatened from his very birth and must be "saved". A person's "being" is at stake ("en enjeu"¹⁸) in his life and its securing provides the meaning of life for Marcel. In his opinion human suffering is rendered understandable by thinking that it serves as a test for man's growth in "being".

Marcel is aware here that he is using theological terms and he wants us to try to forget their association with stereotyped phrases that are heard during the doze that Sunday sermons often cause to fall upon the congregation.¹⁹ Rather he is using "soul" in the sense that Keats meant when he spoke of the world as "The vale of Soul-making".²⁰ Keats also expresses Marcel's view of the soul when he writes: "As various as the Lives of Men are - so various become their souls, and thus does God make individual beings, Souls, Identical Souls of the sparks of his own essence".²¹ Marcel, following Keats again, thinks³² that there may be intelligences or sparks of the divinity in millions - but they are not Souls till they acquire identities, till each one is personally itself.

What does Marcel mean when he says that the soul must be saved? He maintains that the soul must be saved, not from "perte" but from "perdition".²³ "Perte" would correspond to what an individual possesses - it is on the level of "having" since it deals with things and people that can be treated as objects outside the self. To avoid "perte" the person, in Marcel's view, must hold on in a "having" way to what he possesses, keeping it exteriorly. Their essence is not changed by being "had".

On the other hand, the person's soul, according to Marcel, will only be in the fullest sense, will only attain its essence

on the ontological level, if it is saved. Salvation or loss belong to the nature of the soul since it is threatened by "perdition".²⁴ Marcel considers it an immense ethical and metaphysical error not to recognize that the soul is thus threatened.²⁵

Man's soul, he believes, is firstly threatened by despair. Man can either commit suicide as a consequence of despair, or capitulate in a thousand ways before what he considers as fatal destiny. Man thus remains fixed, Marcel thinks, his soul being congealed so that he ceases struggling to be human and to become himself. "L'homme qui cède au désespoir, sans cesser d'exister, échoue à être".²⁶

Marcel also²⁷ includes the notion of "présence" to oneself as part of the person's salvation. "Présence", a concept to be discussed in the next chapter, includes not only the other person's "présence" to me, but my "présence" to myself. Marcel thinks that this "présence" to self is not to be taken for granted but is always subject to eclipse and must be reconquered. By this "présence" to self Marcel means being faithful to oneself. He sums up "the self to be faithful to" as that part of creation which is in me as

"le don qui m'a été accordé de toute éternité de participer au drame universel, de travailler par exemple à humaniser la Terre, ou au contraire de la rendre plus inhabitable".²⁸

Marcel concludes this notion, however, by saying that even such precise statements are here fallacious as he is dealing with a reality that can only be known through love. He refers to the concrete experience of love which in his opinion shows that when someone is loved it is not because of "qualités désignables".²⁹ He thinks it is the same for oneself. The mystery of the person can only be revealed through love.

According to Marcel, there are other ways of losing the soul which always remains "at stake". The person can refuse to be, can look for his own destruction, which Marcel considers as sin. Everyone is a sinner, Marcel thinks, because he shares in "une oeuvre de mort" which is at work in the world. The person shares in it as much through his inertia and blindness, as through any bad action.³⁰ Sin is the individual choosing nothingness rather than "being", preferring disintegration of his person to integration and taking the self as the centre of his existence.

If, Marcel believes, the individual reduces sin to failure to keep rules and observe duties, he runs the risk of enclosing himself in a system of which he will be the centre, a system which will revolve around the thought of his own personal salvation or damnation. Marcel considers that this will tend to make the individual a prisoner of a self-centred conception of what he calls "le drame personnel et la vie spirituelle".³¹ Such a system is foreign, he thinks, to true Christianity. While sin is fundamentally, in Marcel's eyes,³² the refusal to give and receive, salvation lies in the will to be open and participate, for the soul of its essence, being in the image of God, "aspire à la communion universelle".³³

PART III: From Selfish to True Self-love

Growth in "being" and "la vie spirituelle"³⁴ demand, in Marcel's view, that man have a proper love of self on which to base his spiritual progress. There are, however, several obstacles to this true self-love, according to Marcel.

The primary difficulty is man's tendency to make himself his own prison. Marcel maintains³⁵ that in fact the only important question is that man ceases to be a prisoner for himself.

He seems to mean that the problems surrounding man's existence take on this appearance when viewed from the category of "having". "Having", as we have seen, reduces man to being alienated, objectified and divided within himself.

Salvation for Marcel³⁶ is reached when one is no longer one's own prison. In his opinion it is the ego which traps the self. He declares³⁷ that his life and his reflections have led him to emphasize that the ego (le moi) is more often a closing-off device than a principle of true creation. In other words, creation, which in Marcel's view is at the core of "being", is often impeded by the self which forbids man's access to it.

Man's imprisonment by his self is partly due, in Marcel's eyes, to self-consciousness. By this Marcel means that the ego is encumbered with itself,³⁸ so that it becomes a screen between the person's consciousness and others. He adds that, in his view,³⁹ the individual can be paralysed by the often quite wrong idea that he has of himself in his relations with others. The self-conscious person suffers from a paradoxical tension, according to Marcel,⁴⁰ since he is at the same time completely preoccupied with himself and hypnotized by the opinion of others. The result is the contrary of what Marcel calls "inter-subjectivité",⁴¹ a concept to be examined in the next chapter. If someone speaks to the self-conscious person, the latter experiences him, in Marcel's view, as "pur lui"⁴². He wonders: "Why is he talking to me?" He is on the defensive with the person who is addressing him, Marcel thinks, because the other is truly exterior to a circle he forms round himself⁴³. In Marcel's opinion, the self-conscious individual is "aussi peu que possible avec"⁴⁴ the other, in the sense that "la relation avec est précisément inter-subjective par excellence".⁴⁵ There is, in Marcel's estimate, no "inter-subjectivité" in the world

of objects since such a world is one of pure juxtaposition. It is in this sense that the other becomes a "lui" for the self-conscious person, and so prevents a break-through to "being". It is impossible, according to Marcel,⁴⁶ for the self-conscious person to communicate with others, in the proper sense of the term.

Another way in which the individual can be a prison for himself, in Marcel's view,⁴⁷ is for him to be a captive of his own ways of feeling, his own covetousness and anxiety. This causes him, as Marcel sees it, to be on this side of good and evil, literally unawakened to reality. Marcel thinks⁴⁸ that each person is as yet asleep in a considerable part of his life and "being". By this he means that the person is evolving on the margin of reality as if he was walking in his sleep. The paradox is, for Marcel, that the person may be self-conscious yet unaware of his feelings. In Marcel's view,⁴⁹ the true egoist is unable to see what his ego hides from him and views the other person as only of value in so far as he appreciates and admires him. The result for Marcel⁵⁰ is that when the individual is preoccupied with the effect he has on the other, all his acts, words and attitudes lose their authenticity. They do not express the true person in Marcel's view. As well, the egoist who treats the other as "un resonateur ou un amplificateur"⁵¹ reduces him, Marcel thinks, to being a tool at his disposal. The egoist forms an idea of the other which can become, in a strange way, an idol or a substitute for the other to which he refers all he says and does.

To the extent the individual is closed in on himself, he is, according to Marcel,⁵² susceptible or sensitive in a way that lies at the core of anguish rather than of love. Since he is encumbered with himself, Marcel affirms, this individual

watches everything that comes to him from an anxiety - provoking world, in turn threatening and helpful, to see whether it will soothe or exacerbate the wound he carries in himself - the wound which, as Marcel sees it, is the individual's self. Marcel⁵³ seeks to discover the nature of this anguish or wound and concludes that it is above all the experience of a contradiction between the all a person seeks to possess, monopolize or annex to himself, and the obscure awareness of an inner emptiness despite everything. In Marcel's opinion,⁵⁴ this individual can affirm nothing of himself that is authentically himself, nothing that is permanent and beyond the reach of criticism or time. Hence the self-centred individual needs the other, a paradox for Marcel in that it is from the other alone that this type of person hopes to attain his solidity as a person.

Marcel continues his psychological analysis of the individual who loves himself in a selfish way by taking the example of a man who poses to be what he is not. The poseur, who, in Marcel's view,⁵⁵ seems to be preoccupied only with others, is in reality only concerned with himself. For this individual, Marcel thinks, the other is of interest only to the degree he is capable of forming a favourable impression of him, which in his turn the poseur makes his own. The other reflects the image which delights him, an idol of himself. If others, Marcel says,⁵⁶ in turn jeer at him, he is liable to conclude that he is dealing with imbeciles and will enclose himself jealously in a little private sanctuary where he finds himself alone with his idol.

In Marcel's view⁵⁷ egoism is fostered in the modern world by the constant competition between individuals which can only increase self-consciousness in the bad sense and self-love. Marcel, in this context of competitiveness, declares⁵⁸ that it

is a fatal error to hold that the ego is the source of originality. He thinks rather that the person should speak of his gifts since

"le meilleur de moi ne m'appartient pas, je n'en suis aucunement propriétaire, mais seulement dépositaire".⁵⁹ The origin of this view is his idea that "being" is creative of the person. Marcel maintains it is a pure fiction to imagine a preexisting ego upon which gifts have been conferred by right or merit. In his view⁶⁰ gifts are bestowed as a deposit which the individual must render fruitful, or they are the result of an appeal made or a question asked of him. To be proud of one's gifts as coming from the self Marcel calls "égocentrisme moral".⁶¹

Marcel indicates⁶² that there are two sorts of self-love between which there exists an absolute opposition. One is an idolatrous love, the nature of which has been explored above, and the other is a true love towards oneself. For Marcel¹³ the self is not a reality which is able to be isolated as an element or principle but what he calls "un accent"⁶⁴ the person confers, not upon all his experience but on a certain portion of his experience that he seeks to preserve against the expectation that it can be separated out. In Marcel's view, it is impossible to assign precise limits to the self because the self is not "un emplacement".⁶⁵

True self-love for Marcel, therefore, does not treat the self as a full reality sufficient to itself, but as a simple seed to be made fruitful,⁶⁶ or a point of contact for the spiritual and even divine in the world. In Marcel's view, the self can be a place for encountering "being". Marcel's idea of proper self-love is not a smugness but an attempt at realizing oneself as fully as possible. He means this presumably as

self-awareness but not self-consciousness, as reception but not assertion of one's gifts. Opposed to true self-love, in Marcel's scheme,⁶⁷ is infatuation with the self, which opposes creative activity of whatever order - artistic, scientific or personal - and a harshness with one's self. Thus Marcel recommends patience towards the self, allied with lucidity, which have both been favoured by spiritually-developed men like St. Francis de Sales.

True love for self, according to Marcel,⁶⁸ demands both a proximity to and a distance from the self. He thinks that in practice men are often unable to see themselves as they are and more often, even if they are undeceived, they are liable always to lose that contact with themselves that they must maintain with their neighbour.⁶⁹ Proper self-love, in Marcel's view, requires unblinkered knowledge of the self.

Marcel calls this contact with the self "présence à moi-même".⁷⁰ It is opposed to the much more common alienation from the self, wherein the person has lost contact with himself. When the person is in this stage of alienation, Marcel thinks, he cannot even imagine what "présence" to self involves and he is rendered incapable of believing also in the presence of the other to the self.⁷¹ "Présence" to self, in Marcel's view, is at the root of creativity which, he maintains, is not productivity. This "présence" is not to be confused with self-complacency or self-pity.

Another condition for this growth, Marcel thinks, is increasing self-respect. This is threatened when the person is transformed into an instrument powerless before an oppressor.⁷² The person must develop respect for himself based on the refusal to allow anyone to reduce him to being an instrument.⁷³

Spiritual growth, Marcel considers,⁷⁴ is also fostered by

intimacy with self. There is what he calls "intersubjectivité" within the person, allowing him intimacy with himself. This intimacy, Marcel thinks, is essential to the soul's growth since it fosters love of self where the soul is "toi pour moi".⁷⁵ There is, however, in Marcel's view, the possibility that the individual will be closed to himself, so that he no longer communicates with himself and, a fortiori, with others.⁷⁶ Marcel declares that this self-intimacy is in no way the same as introspection and is not self-centred. True awareness of self, he thinks, demands the other, for, in his view, it is only if the person begins from the other that he can learn to understand himself.⁷⁷ Marcel is of the opinion that the individual can only accord himself some worth to the degree he knows himself loved by others whom he in turn loves.⁷⁸ The other alone can neutralize the person against egotism.

Modern man is particularly threatened, Marcel thinks,⁷⁹ by things and technical progress which tend to place his centre of gravity outside himself. Such progress demands an accompanying interior conquest of the self. Otherwise, he thinks, man will centre himself in the things and tools on which he depends. Marcel is of the paradoxical view that the more man dominates nature, the more man becomes the slave of this very conquest.

PART IV: From "Indisponibilité" to "Disponibilité"

Linked closely to egotism and "having", according to Marcel, is the notion of "indisponibilité". Its opposite, "disponibilité", opens out to the other and "being".

Marcel holds that there is a close tie between the world of "having" and "indisponibilité", with "having" at the root of the latter.⁸⁰ The person, he maintains, tends to render himself "indisponible" to the precise degree he treats his life or his "being" as something to be dealt with in a quantifiable

way, so that it can be "dilapidé, épuisé on même volatisé".⁸¹

The extent of a person's "disponibilité" is also tied to Marcel's concept of "présence" which is to be analysed in the next chapter. In Marcel's opinion, there is an evident link between "présence" and "disponibilité". He declares⁸² it an undeniable fact of experience that there are certain people who reveal themselves as "présent", that is, they are "disponible" when a person suffers or needs to confide, and that there are others who do not give this feeling, however hard they try. He maintains⁸³ that the distinction between being "présent" and not being "présent" is in no way tied to the difference between attentiveness and inattention. Marcel's explanation for this is based on his experience that even the most attentive listener can convey the impression of being "indisponible". Whatever material services he may render his listener, the "indisponible" individual brings him nothing since he can make no room in himself for his hearer. Marcel⁸⁴ believes that there is a way of listening that is a giving and another way of listening that is a refusal of the self. In his view, the material gift or action does not necessarily indicate "présence", which cannot be proved to be there, but is revealed only by a look, a smile, a tone of voice or a shaking of the hands.

For Marcel⁸⁵ the "disponible" person is the one who is able to be with the other when the latter needs him, while the "indisponible" individual is on the contrary the one who seems to bestow on the other only a temporary loan of the resources he has at his command. The "disponible" person treats the other as a presence, while the "indisponible" individual treats him as an object.

Marcel proceeds to give a concrete analysis of "indisponibilité". He maintains that at its heart "nous trouverons tou-

jours une certaine aliénation".⁸⁶ To explain what he means he gives the following example. Someone seeks my sympathy for another unfortunate person whose story he tells me. I grasp what he says to me, I recognize in an abstract way that the individual of whom he speaks merits my compassion, I recognize that here is a case where it would be logical and just to reply with sympathy. I, however, only give sympathy mentally because I am forced to admit that I feel nothing. I regret this contradiction between what I experience - my indifference - and what I recognize I ought to experience, a contradiction which irritates me because it diminishes me in my own eyes. I am left with the feeling that, after all, I am dealing with people I do not know, and that life would be unbearable if I had to feel for all the unfortunate. From the moment I think that after all it is only case 75-627, I can feel nothing.

The "disponible" or present person is, according to Marcel, characterized by not thinking in terms of cases.

It would seem, nevertheless, that perhaps in this example Marcel is being too hard on human beings. It is surely one thing, and justly open to criticism, not to feel for people one knows and to treat any individual as a case. It is surely a quite different thing not to feel for people one is not acquainted with. None the less it remains true, even if we quibble over an example, that the "indisponible" individual remains alienated from what he ought to feel. This chimes in both with Marcel's views on self-love as already examined and with the alienation seen in the chapter on "having" as the mark of that world.

Being "indisponible" to others is, for Marcel,⁸⁷ what lies at the root of the creature as such. By this, presumably, Marcel means the individual who, in Christian terms, shares

the nature of fallen man and is therefore separated from God and fellow men. Marcel thinks, as a⁸⁸ consequence, that what is known as the spiritual life can be viewed as all those activities by which man seeks to reduce the hold "indisponibilité" has over him. This amounts to a negative view of the spiritual life, yet, given Marcel's approach, would seem to be true as far as it goes. The "indisponible" individual adheres to himself in an illegitimate type of self-love.

For Marcel⁸⁹ there are two cases where this alienation characteristic of "indisponibilité" is not to be found - in the saint and the child. In the first case, the person has given up that preoccupation with self which goes with being "indisponible", and in the second, the individual has presumably not yet been misshapen by life. It would seem, however, that Marcel has too idealistic a view of the child, as any parent would say that a child can be preoccupied with itself, though equally a child can be open to the sufferings of others through its simplicity but not mature acceptance.

Marcel, however, thinks⁹⁰ that as the person becomes more established in life, there occurs a certain separation in his experience between what does and does not concern him. Each person according to Marcel tends thus to become the centre of his "espace mental"⁹¹ which arranges itself into concentric zones of decreasing adherence and interest. A corresponding state of being "indisponible" increases the more the individual is not interested. Marcel maintains⁹² that it is exactly as if each individual secreted a shell which becomes more and more hard as it imprisons him. This shell corresponds to the "having" in which a person is immersed and to the mental categories through which he views the world.

This state of "indisponibilité" comes to appear natural to

the individual. And yet, Marcel thinks, the person can so meet others that they break through the framework of this ego-centric mentality, and a chance encounter can suddenly reverse all the previous outlook and make the distant seem near and the faraway close at hand. According to Marcel,⁹³ such encounters may be only brief, yet they make the individual aware that his "espace mental" can be arranged differently and is in fact ordered only by contingency and accident. He adds that encountering⁹⁴ saintly people, in his view, can make a person realize that what he has regarded as normal represents, from the saint's viewpoint, the very undermining of what ought to prevail. For the saint, in Marcel's mind, is rooted in "le mystère ontologique".⁹⁵

"Indisponibilité" for Marcel is closely linked with a certain way of adhering to oneself.⁹⁶ This is not the true, open love of self studied previously, but the egotistic preoccupation with self as already outlined. The individual taken up with himself cannot be present to others, cannot be for the other. According to Marcel⁹⁷ it does not matter what aspect of self the individual is concerned with - health, fortune, women, temporal success or even his interior perfection⁹⁸ - what matters is the way in which this concern dominates the individual. Marcel thinks that the remedy is not to be empty or indifferent to the self. He plays up the contrast between the opaque and the transparent individual, a contrast at the root of being open or closed. Marcel views the cause of this opaqueness as a type of fixed anxiety.⁹⁹ By this he means the psychological datum by which an individual is paradoxically centred on himself, yet does not know himself because of his fears. Marcel's proof of this lies, he maintains, in his own intimate experience.¹⁰⁰ The individual's anxiety is linked closely with a

contraction of the self - the will is less free as he becomes hardened and fixed. Marcel can, therefore, define being "indisponible" as "inertie intérieure"¹⁰¹ - mental stagnation.

This anxiety, in Marcel's view, is anguish at feeling oneself in the grip of time and of inexorable death. Here he joins, he maintains, Heidegger¹⁰² and perhaps Kierkegaard, in his analysis of pessimism and despair. The roots of pessimism, as Marcel views it, are the same as those of being "indisponible". The more an individual is "indisponible" the less he has room for hope. If he becomes more "indisponible" as he ages, it is usually, Marcel thinks,¹⁰³ because his anguish increases. The more he approaches an end, for his own self-protection his anguish takes up a more and more defensive position and becomes all the more vulnerable. The individual becomes more prone to despair as he comes to be more in the grip of his experience in the world of the "problématique".¹⁰⁴

An individual's tendency to "indisponibilité" grows with the grip "having" exercises over him, according to Marcel.¹⁰⁵ This "having" increases with anxiety, so that the individual is like a man suspended over nothing, who possesses only a small sum of money which he has to make last as long as possible. He is full of paralysing anxiety which constricts all generosity. This anxiety, in Marcel's view,¹⁰⁶ is linked with interior inertia in which all is stagnant. Marcel is pleased to call this stage "inespoir", a neologism coined by Charles Du Bos to render into French "unhope" from a poem of Thomas Hardy. This stage of despair, anxiety, self-centredness and closure to others Marcel describes as "la mort dans la vie, la mort anticipée".¹⁰⁷

This stage of death can affect even the creative person, according to Marcel,¹⁰⁸ who links creativity and "disponibilité"

as connected ideas. In this context he thinks that a writer, for example, can be too preoccupied by his work to give others effective sympathy. Marcel distinguishes between "l'oeuvre à faire et l'oeuvre déjà réalisée".¹⁰⁹ From the moment the writer is so absorbed in a work already created that it becomes the centre of his world, so that he uses it to judge the works of others, it becomes an "avoir" at which his thoughts are anxiously aimed, and he puts himself in a state of "indisponibilité".¹¹⁰ Marcel considers this stage sterile and entirely different from the true creative condition of the artist who is concerned with a work to be brought forth from his being. This work to be finished is the object of the writer's substance; it is, according to Marcel, his vocation materialized. The work in process of creation is ordered to relationships with others; it is the artist's way of giving himself to the world¹¹¹ and cannot be possessed as a thing. To the observer, however, Marcel seems here to be making too broad a distinction between the two sorts of works, a distinction which is more mental than real. A writer need not treat his works in a "having" way, but can allow them to be used creatively.

Marcel adds that this distinction applies not only to a work of art but also to the level "où je me pose moi-même étant à accomplir, à créer".¹¹² Marcel thinks that there is a distinction like that between "l'oeuvre faite et l'oeuvre à réaliser" within the area of the person. The individual can distinguish between the ego as a collection of qualities and as being continuously created. Marcel warns, however, that when speaking of what the person can become there is the danger, which can be destructive, of concentrating solely on his own perfection as interior ordering and not as setting up a relationship either with God or his neighbour through service or a

work to be created.

"Disponibilité", on the contrary, is the mark of the true person, according to Marcel, his essential characteristic".¹¹³ The "disponible" person is the opposite of the individual pre-occupied with himself,¹¹⁴ being ready to consecrate himself to a cause which surpasses him, even while he makes it his own.

Therefore Marcel says in one of his characteristic sweeping statements: "l'âme la plus essentiellement dédiée est ipso facto la plus disponible".¹¹⁵ In his view the "disponible" person is not free to dispose of himself by suicide. He can give his life for a superior cause, Marcel thinks, so that he shows "il a situé son être au delà de la vie".¹¹⁶ But to commit suicide is for Marcel to deny this, it is to want to make oneself closed to others, to refuse to be open.

"Disponibilité", in Marcel's view, protects the person against despair and suicide because he knows he does not belong to himself. In his opinion the individual uses his freedom in recognizing he does not belong to himself and from this recognition as a starting-point he can begin to act and create.¹¹⁷ In the sacrifice of self which creates the "disponible" person "nous avons quitté le terrain de l'Avoir proprement dit".¹¹⁸ The "indisponible" individual, on the contrary, treats his life as something at his own disposal. True self-sacrifice is essentially creative since Marcel thinks "c'est justement en se sacrifiant qu'il se réalise, qu'il est".¹¹⁹ "Disponibilité" and consecration for Marcel lead to what he calls "le niveau existentiel",¹²⁰ that is, they give access to "being". They are, therefore, central to Marcel's philosophy.

Such, then, are the psychological and spiritual conditions which, according to Marcel, help or hinder a person's development in being. Marcel concludes what he has to say when he

describes egoism as absolutely limited,¹²¹ in that the egotist seeks only to enjoy himself and suffer as little as possible, while at the same time being cut off from helpful relationships.

In speaking to one of his friends, a Russian, Marcel talked of his work as a new Maieutic.¹²² His friend replied that his work was indeed that of bringing into the world a child of eternity. Marcel agrees with this expression since this child is the "being" in the person which, while appearing unable to be quite fully realised, aims at liberating itself from any grip of "having" - such as desire, self-love or fear.

Marcel sums up his view of personal spiritual growth by quoting with approval the words of Gustave Thibon:

"Tu te sens à l'étroit. Tu rêves d'évasion. Mais prends garde aux mirages. Pour t'évader, ne cours pas, ne te fuis pas: creuse plutôt cette place étroite qui t'est donnée: tu y trouveras Dieu et tout. Dieu ne flotte pas sur ton horizon, il dort dans ton épaisseur. La vanité court, l'amour creuse. Si tu fuis hors de toi-même, ta prison courra avec toi et se retrécira au vent de ta course: si tu t'enfonces en toi-même, elle s'évasera en paradis".¹²³

Footnotes to Chapter Four

1. PEA. P.53.
2. DR. P.130.
3. DH. P.107-108.
4. P.282.
5. EA.II. P.43.
6. *ibid.* P.96.
7. ME.II. P.36.
8. *ibid.* P.36.
9. *ibid.* P.36.
10. *ibid.* P.36.
11. *ibid.* P.36-37.
12. Troisfontaines Tome I. P.394.
13. ME.II. P.33.
14. *ibid.* P.33.
15. *ibid.* P.33.
16. Troisfontaines Tome I. P.389.
17. *ibid.* P.391.
18. EA.II. P.44.
19. *ibid.* P.44.
20. Letters Vol.II. P.102. Marcel quotes with approval the words of Augustine: "Animas nostras et deum simul concorditer inquiramus". (Soliloques 16).
21. *ibid.* P.103.
22. JM. P.197.
23. Troisfontaines Tome I. P.392.
24. *ibid.* P.393.
25. *ibid.* P.393.
26. *ibid.* P.393.
27. HV. P.173.
28. *ibid.* P.173.
29. *ibid.* P.174.
30. PI. P.85.
31. *ibid.* P.84.
32. Troisfontaines Tome I. P.394.
33. *ibid.* P.395.
34. PEA. P.53.
35. PI. P.86.
36. *ibid.* P.86.
37. DH. P.136.

38. *ibid.* P.136. Marcel here uses the English expression "self-conscious" in its pejorative sense. The French "conscient de soi" and the German "selbstbewusst" do not have this sense.
39. *ibid.* P.136. Marcel adds that this is one of the roots of timidity.
40. ME.I. P.192.
41. *ibid.* P.193.
42. *ibid.* P.193.
43. EA.I. P.131.
44. ME.I. P.193.
45. *ibid.* P.193.
46. EA.I. P.131. He adds that even the idea of such a communication is impossible.
47. HV. P.27.
48. *ibid.* P.27. Marcel is here verging on the subconscious element in man's mind.
49. DH. P.137.
50. HV. P.20.
51. *ibid.* P.21.
52. *ibid.* P.19.
53. *ibid.* P.19.
54. *ibid.* P.19.
55. *ibid.* P.19.
56. *ibid.* P.21.
57. *ibid.* P.22. Here we see the consequences of a school's adoption of a rigorous examination system.
58. *ibid.* P.22.
59. *ibid.* P.22.
60. *ibid.* P.23.
61. *ibid.* P.23.
62. DR. P.65.
63. HV. P.18.
64. *ibid.* P.18.
65. *ibid.* P.19.
66. DR. P.65-66.
67. *ibid.* P.66.
68. *ibid.* P.66.
69. *ibid.* P.66. Marcel thinks that the psychology of the pure rationalist would illustrate this lack of contact with the self as lying at the root of alienation from the self.
70. PI. P.114.

71. *ibid.* P.114.
72. DH. P.194.
73. *ibid.* P.194.
74. PI. P.122.
75. Troisfontaines Tome I. P.398.
76. PI. P.122.
77. ME.II. P.11-12.
78. *ibid.* P.12.
79. HC. P.46.
80. EA.I. P.104.
81. RI. P.76.
82. PEA. P.83.
83. *ibid.* P.83.
84. *ibid.* P.83.
85. *ibid.* P.83.
86. *ibid.* P.84.
87. EA.I. P.85-86.
88. *ibid.* P.86.
89. *ibid.* P.87.
90. *ibid.* P.87.
91. *ibid.* P.87.
92. PEA. P.85.
93. EA.I. P.88.
94. *ibid.* P.88.
95. PEA. P.85. Marcel here indicates that sanctity has for him immense speculative value and he is inclined to think of it as the true introduction to ontology.
96. EA.I. P.90.
97. *ibid.* P.90.
98. PEA. P.86.
99. *ibid.* P.86.
100. EA.I. P.90.
101. RI. P.75.
102. EA.I. P.90-91.
103. PEA. P.87.
104. *ibid.* P.87.
105. DR. P.76.
106. *ibid.* P.77.
107. *ibid.* P.77.
108. *ibid.* P.75.
109. *ibid.* P.75.
110. *ibid.* P.75.

- 111. *ibid.* P.75.
- 112. *ibid.* P.76.
- 113. HV. P.27.
- 114. *ibid.* P.30.
- 115. EA.I. P.158.
- 116. DR. P.106.
- 117. PEA. P.87.
- 118. ME.I. P.179.
- 119. *ibid.* P.181.
- 120. PI. P.156.
- 121. *ibid.* P.131.
- 122. *ibid.* P.184.
- 123. HV. P.34.

CHAPTER FIVE

GROWTH IN BEING THROUGH OTHERS

PART I: The Relationship of the Self and Others

In Marcel's view,¹ there may be a dilemma confronting the self in search of "being". The individual can argue that thought may concentrate on the unity and transcendence of "being", while tending to the view that the diversity of beings may be ignored, or it may stress that very diversity and see in "being" in itself something fictitious or an abstract idea to which nothing real corresponds. Marcel regards² such a dilemma as false and he always refuses to accept it as true to "being". He has always taken as a first principle, even before he can justify it, that the more we recognize the individual being as such, the more we shall be oriented towards the attainment of "being".

"Being", we have seen, can only be attained, in Marcel's opinion, through participation with other persons. Personal relationships provide, Marcel believes,³ a type of vital milieu from which the soul may draw its force and renew itself. Therefore human experience has about it what Marcel calls "poids ontologique" which he identifies with love.⁴ True ontology, Marcel thinks, requires for its definition that the dimension of interpersonal relationships be added to that of objective knowledge.

It is for this reason that Marcel uses the following quotation from E.M. Forster as the epigraph to the second part of his Journal Métaphysique:

"It is private life that holds out the mirror to infinity; personal intercourse, and that alone, that ever

hints at a personality beyond our daily vision".⁵

Marcel maintains⁶ that this quotation sums up exactly one of the fundamental convictions that animate his entire philosophical development. The importance he gives to this dimension of personal relationships is in accord with his view of philosophy, which, as was seen in the Introduction, he believes is most authentic when it seems "se situer à la jointure de soi et d'autrui".⁷ This means that for Marcel philosophy is not merely a private pursuit within a subject that deals with those realities in which the person is the end or "en enjeu".

There is, in Marcel's view, a reciprocal relationship between the self and the other. Firstly, knowing the self leads to a knowledge of the other. The philosopher, Marcel thinks,⁸ does not approach himself as a tabula rasa, but he should seek to understand his life as completely as possible. Marcel says he means "life" in the sense of "experience". In learning to understand himself, the philosopher discovers that the more he raises himself to an "aperception concrète"⁹ of his own experience, the more he will be led to an effective knowledge of the other.

To this, Marcel declares, someone may object that the concrete knowledge of self is always egocentric. Marcel maintains¹⁰ that the opposite is true. He thinks that true self-knowledge is found in common with the knowledge of other people's experience. Both grow together, in Marcel's opinion. Self-centredness is possible only for the individual who has not made himself master of his own experience and assimilated his life. This egotism will indeed, Marcel thinks, block the individual off from the other since it is always blinding about himself and the other. The egotist is not clear about himself either, despite the paradoxical fact that he thinks only of

his own interests. He does not know his real needs, Marcel holds,¹¹ and he does not know that he is deceiving himself. This means for Marcel that philosophy is not merely a private pursuit within a subject but deals with those realities in which the person is "en enjeu".

When he speaks of the junction of the self and the other, Marcel is not speaking in spatial terms. He refuses to admit that there may exist "une sorte de démarcation ou de suture"¹² between a domain belonging to the self on the one hand, and a domain belonging to someone else on the other hand. He declares that philosophy and literature both teach that the world of other people is lit up with a more and more intense light to the degree that the ego emerges from its own darkness.¹³

The more the person seeks, Marcel maintains, to free himself by communicating with himself through understanding what is most obscure in his self, the more he will be liberated from the "automatisme"¹⁴ which is only "une ankylose du jugement".¹⁵ On the contrary, however, Marcel holds that the more the individual abandons himself to this "automatisme", the more the other will become for him only a collection of abstractions with which he cannot maintain any living communication.

Marcel thinks¹⁶ of an objection to this need for communication with the self. Some people who are very spontaneous and yet incapable of penetrating their interior shadow are precisely those who are most able to communicate, he affirms. He agrees with this assessment because these people are almost free of the self-consciousness¹⁷ which causes the inability to communicate by making the individual "contractée et comme crispée".¹⁸ Marcel's reply is to distinguish two levels of communication - one being that of "naïveté" in which the child-

like spirit precedes self-consciousness, the other being infinitely above it, where self-consciousness has in some way triumphed over itself. The philosopher has superseded self-consciousness, Marcel holds, so that he cannot return to the state of childlike spontaneity.¹⁹ He can only pass through self-consciousness if he is to reopen the lines of communication which have been in some way blocked. He has, according to Marcel, to undertake this exploration into a world of thought where he will find himself on the same level as his neighbour.

For Marcel,²⁰ philosophy is situated precisely in this world of personal relationships. He realizes such an idea of philosophy is opposed to an "eremetical" tendency that is found in certain contemporary philosophers, and, in his view, in many poets. Marcel is of the opinion²¹ that the philosopher must push to the limit his will to communicate. This desire is only achieved through a detour.

"Philosophiquement, le chemin qui mène de moi à l'autre, passe par mes propres profondeurs".²² Man comes to know his depths, Marcel thinks, not so much by introspection as by the experience he gains of himself in the course of his life.

There is another side to the reciprocity of self and the other, according to Marcel, namely the idea that the other leads to the creation of the self. Marcel distinguishes²³ between the initial self man has before he matures and the self man grows to acquire. In his view, there is nothing in common between these two selves. Marcel holds that the road that leads to the second self passes through the other person. Indeed, speaking of others, Marcel can declare "ma substance est faite d'eux".²⁴ Through others, he holds, "je me produis",²⁵ in the etymological sense of the word.

The other is needed to reply to the central philosophical question posed by Marcel - "qui suis-je?" The person cannot really give a valid answer himself, Marcel maintains.²⁶ The individual is often aware of being in the middle of a labyrinth when he tries to find himself. Marcel considers that this awareness makes us turn to the other who is nearest and most faithful to us "pour nous permettre d'en sortir, c'est-à-dire en somme de nous reconnaître".²⁷ The other knows the person better than the latter knows himself, Marcel holds. He can tell the person if he is an egoist or heartless.

Marcel, however, poses an immediate objection. The person enquiring about himself has made the choice of the other as most able to enlighten him because of his friendship with him and because he thinks the other has the required qualities to judge him. The difficulty is that the person himself has given the other authority over him. For these reasons Marcel thinks²⁸ that there can be no valid answer to the question "qui suis-je?", which is therefore a contradiction, is humanly insoluble and can receive no certain response.

Some psychologists would say, none the less, that the person is often the best judge of himself and that the other can tell the person how he seems to his neighbour.

Moreover, the individual, in Marcel's view, needs the other if he is to become a complete person. The person, he holds,²⁹ is not a thing distinct from this other thing which would be the ego ("le moi"), as a kind of separate compartment. Marcel would also state that the person cannot be seen as an element or attribute of "le moi" but is rather "une exigence",³⁰ which comes to birth in what appears to me as being mine or as being me. It is "une exigence" which only becomes aware of itself in assuming reality, which can in no way be

said to be "une velleité", but belongs to the order of "je veux". Thus Marcel can say:

"Je m'affirme comme personne dans la mesure où j'assume la responsabilité de ce que je fais et de ce que je dis".³¹

The person, in Marcel's thought, is responsible both before himself and before the other. Both are needed, Marcel affirms, to attain that "engagement personnel"³² which he considers is the proper mark of the person. Others are needed if the person is to conduct himself as a real being, participating in a real world.³³

"Personne - engagement - communauté - réalité",³⁴ these are linked notions which cannot be deduced one from the other, in Marcel's view, but which form the ambit of the person.

PART II: The Self and the Other in I-Thou Relationships

In seeking to understand how dialogue between human beings is possible, Marcel states³⁵ he was led to concentrate attention on the second person in grammatical terms, which, he maintains, has been strangely neglected by philosophers until the present. Marcel holds that in modern times there has been a singular convergence on this point by men who worked separately and often alone. He quotes³⁶ the examples of the Austrian Ferdinand Ebner whose book "Wort und Liebe" he read only about 1935 and Martin Buber's "Je et Tu" with which Marcel only became acquainted well after he had expressed himself on this matter.

Indeed it is true that Marcel writes of the second person in his early "Journal Métaphysique". There³⁷ he speaks of the slow passage from a pure dialectic to love which occurs the more profoundly the Thou becomes a Thou. By this Marcel means that the other begins by being essentially an it ("un lui"³⁸) who has only the form of a Thou. When a person treats the

other as an It, he treats him as essentially absent. This absence, Marcel considers, allows the person to objectify him, to reason about him as if he is a nature or an essence that is given in advance. But, in Marcel's view,³⁹ there is a type of presence (a term to be discussed later), which is yet a way of being absent. The individual can act before someone as if he were absent.

Marcel illustrates what he means by borrowing examples from daily life. He quotes a page from his "Journal Métaphysique" where he describes a chance encounter with a stranger on a train. We speak of the temperature, the war news, and, despite our communication, he remains still "quelqu'un", "cet homme - là", "un tel",⁴⁰ whose biography I learn slowly. Marcel goes on to point out that, as he sees it, the remarkable thing is that the more the other is exterior to me, the more, and to the same degree, I am exterior to myself. Marcel writes:

"en face d'un tel, je deviens moi aussi tel autre, à moins que je ne sois à la lettre plus personne".⁴¹

Marcel notes that, in his view, a bond can develop between the two, if they discover they share a common experience, so that they both create a "nous", a unity, which means that the other ceases to be an "It" and becomes a "Thou". They communicate, Marcel thinks, which means the other ceases to be someone talked about, he stops being "encadré entre moi et moi-même".⁴² Marcel explains his meaning here by alleging that this "moi-même" with whom I have formed a coalition to examine and judge the other, has melted in this living unity he now forms with me. Marcel adds:

"Nous voyons ici s'ouvrir le chemin qui même de la dialectique à l'amour".⁴³

This love attained means for Marcel that the person loved is as far as possible from being a third person ("un tiers") for the lover. As well as allowing me to discover myself, my exterior defences fall at the same time as the divisions which separate me from other people. He belongs more and more to the circle outside of which there are "des tiers"⁴⁴ who are others.

Marcel continues by saying that the person only communicates with himself in the measure that he communicates with the other, which is to say that the latter must become a "Thou". This change in the other can only come about, Marcel thinks, because of a movement of interior relaxation through which the person ends the contraction by which he deforms himself.

Marcel comments on the inadequacy of André Gide's statement: "Connais-toi toi-même. Maxime aussi pernicieuse que laide. Quiconque s'observe arrête son développement".⁴⁵ Marcel thinks that the maxim is at fault only in being too concise. He adds that the knowledge of self attacked by Gide is that acquired through retiring within oneself. This type of self-acquaintance is but the reduced and mutilated awareness of a reality we reach, according to Marcel,⁴⁶ only through others, and only in so far as we maintain with them a relationship which is living and animated by love.

Spiritual development for Marcel, therefore, requires the level of the self and the other as other to be transcended. This primary level is precisely the level of the individual in the grasp of "having", in Marcel's view.⁴⁷ This stage is marked by polarity and tension between the self and the other. For Marcel the self in this case is "un épaississement ... une sclérose".⁴⁸ This level can be transcended through love which revolves around a position which is neither that of the self, nor of the other as other - it is the position of the Thou.

Marcel says he would prefer a more philosophical term but he realizes⁴⁹ that abstract language risks causing one to treat the other as "lui". The "Thou" alone "possède le secret de ce que je suis et de ce que je suis apte à devenir".⁵⁰ This is the formula of what Marcel calls "invocation".

Interpersonal relationships demand that there be a response from the other. Where the other is merely an object, Marcel thinks,⁵¹ this means it takes no account of the subject, since the subject ceases to count for it. The ego addresses in the second person only him who is able to reply in some way. This does not demand words, in Marcel's view, since the purest form of invocation, address to the other as able to respond, is found in prayer. This latter finds its fulfilment, not so much in words, as in a certain interior transformation, or "un afflux mystérieux",⁵² an ineffable sense of peace.

The other as other, Marcel believes,⁵³ only exists for me in so far as I am open to him, and I am only open to him in as much as I cease forming a circle with myself inside which I place the other, or better the idea of the other; and the idea of the other is not the other in himself but the other as related to me, which makes him, in Marcel's view,⁵⁴ run down and disjointed.

Marcel thinks⁵⁵ it is clear that if I consider the other as a sort of mechanism exterior to myself, the workings of which I must discover, I shall only succeed in obtaining an acquaintance with him which is quite exterior, and which in some way denies him as a real being. Such a knowledge, Marcel believes, is sacrilegious and destructive since it deprives the other of his unique value and degrades him. This means for Marcel⁵⁶ that the knowledge of a particular individual is not to be separated from the love through which he is consti-

tuted a unique person or made a child of God.

In Marcel's view⁵⁷ the concrete and full knowledge of oneself is not self-centred, but paradoxically, must be centred on the other. It is only if we start from the other that we can understand ourselves, Marcel thinks, and it is only from the other that we can acquire legitimate love of self.

"En dernière analyse, je ne suis fondé à m'accorder à moi-même quelque prix que dans la mesure où je me sais moi-même aimé par d'autres êtres qui sont aimés de moi".⁵⁸

Others are needed, in Marcel's opinion, therefore, to found self-love and to immunize against egotism. For as long as an individual only sees in the other an object to have, he is shut up within himself outside of all freedom. When, however, he knows that others are the condition of his liberty, then "it" becomes a "thou" which is always separate from him, but always present. Therefore "co-être" is the fundamental principle allowing a person to understand and affirm the world in which he exists. If the individual is open to the other,⁵⁹ that leads the other to open himself to the person. It is only being open that can stop the person from becoming petrified since it makes a breach in the wall of his ego and renders him "disponible".

Therefore it can be seen that Marcel's philosophy is indeed situated at the point where the self meets the other. For Marcel the self only is in so far as it exists for others, "car être est toujours co-être".⁶⁰

PART III: The Realm of Intersubjectivité

In Marcel's view, each person to achieve his spiritual development must open himself to other beings who are different from him, and he must become capable of welcoming them

without allowing himself to be effaced or neutralized by them. This openness to others Marcel calls "l'intersubjectivité",⁶¹ which is not something to be taken for granted as a "given", but is a progressive conquest over all that can lead the individual to centre and close himself about himself alone. "Intersubjectivité" can only come about through liberty, therefore, Marcel thinks, in the sense of the person acquiring freedom to be.

Marcel, as usual, appeals to concrete experience in explaining what he means by "intersubjectivité". He speaks of what he calls the common experience whereby someone notices

"cet afflux d'être qui peut émaner pour chacun de nous d'une parole entendue, quelquefois même d'un sourire ou d'un geste".⁶²

Marcel maintains he is not speaking merely of psychological experience, for this word or gesture is essentially a transmitter of something other which cannot be enclosed in a formula or a concept. In Marcel's view⁶³ the one who speaks or gestures presents himself to the other, even without wanting to or being conscious of so doing, as the witness to a certain transcendent reality. This recognition by the other may be unspoken, unable to be designated and may often remain in the background. Yet Marcel insists⁶⁴ on seeing the encounter with the other as invested with a spiritual value that it is impossible to overestimate, as possessing "un indice ontologique"⁶⁵ whose meaning cannot be exhausted by any psychological analysis.

Marcel is of the opinion that this ontological search can only begin from a "plénitude vécue".⁶⁶ This fullness cannot stem from a person's own private experience but must derive from "un ensemble commandé par cette relation de l'avec".⁶⁷

"Intersubjectivité" is the soil in which Marcel's philosophy must grow since it is "à la base de l'ontologie".⁶⁸ Thus his metaphysics is essentially anti-Cartesian because his philosophy starts from " nous sommes" rather than "je pense".

"Intersubjectivité" is for Marcel the fact of being open to the other, of welcoming him and at the same time of being more able to reach oneself. This is what he means when he says that the area of personal relationships is the place where "l'ego émerge comme l'île qui se dresse au milieu des flots".⁶⁹

Marcel goes on to ask whether he should identify the interpersonal area with "being". He holds in reply that he cannot say literally that they are the same, yet a true philosophy of "being", in his view, restores around itself a "présence inter-subjective",⁷⁰ which a monadic philosophy tends to "exorcise". What Marcel calls "l'épaisseur de l'être" becomes attenuated the more the ego tries to attribute to itself a central place in knowledge. On the contrary, Marcel holds that the more the ego recognizes that it is one among others, the more it tends to reestablish the sense of this "épaisseur".

He declares, however, that there is the danger of reducing the ego to atoms if we merely say it is one among others. The philosopher, in Marcel's view, must stress that the area of interpersonal relationships has under it "un tréfonds senti",⁷¹ or a community deeply rooted in "being" which makes intelligible all human bonds. The search for "being" cannot be undertaken, therefore, by an isolated, solipsistic self, in Marcel's eyes. He sums up his attitude by saying

"je ne me soucie de l'être que pour autant que je prends conscience plus ou moins distinctement de l'unité sous-

jacente qui me relie à d'autres êtres dont je pressens la réalité".⁷²

For Marcel the area of interpersonal relationships is the domain where existence is affected by the world "with". It is the place where the words "thyself" and "myself" cease to designate two nuclei distinct from each other, between which there can only be objective-type relationships like signals sent from one to the other.⁷³ In Marcel's opinion, a true interpersonal relationship in no way resembles an exchange of radio signals. Because it is not objective, "intersubjectivité" is, for Marcel, not merely subjective but is a reality which is essentially openness.⁷⁴ It is, according to Marcel "le fait d'être ensemble dans la lumière".⁷⁵

"Intersubjectivité" is, therefore, easily threatened if the ego becomes a prisoner of itself, when the other is treated only in so far as he impinges on the ego. Yet Marcel believes openness to the other is possible - he also calls it "charité".⁷⁶ For him, "agapè", "charité" and "intersubjectivité" are terms for the same reality. He maintains, however,⁷⁷ he has not used the term "charité" very often, and adds he only used the term "intersubjectivité" later on after he had already spoken of I - Thou relationships. He asks himself how he managed to do without it as he considers it "la pierre angulaire d'une ontologie concrète".⁷⁸

PART IV: Présence

Marcel is of the opinion that the most direct way to arrive at "le mystère"⁷⁹ is perhaps to analyse the difference in spiritual quality between the object and what he calls "présence". He prefers to take as his starting-point certain experiences which he calls simple and immediate, but which in

his view philosophers have hitherto tended to neglect.

Marcel thinks that we can be in the same room with somebody whom we are able to hear, see and touch, and yet he is not "présent" to us. By this Marcel means that he is infinitely further from us than some being whom we love and who is yet miles away from us or no longer belongs to our world.

He poses the question, therefore,⁸⁰ what is this "présence" which is lacking here. Marcel declares that it is not that we are unable to communicate with this individual near us, since he is neither deaf, nor blind, nor an imbecile. What Marcel calls "une communication matérielle"⁸¹ is assured between us, similar to the type of communication that takes place between two radio-sets, one the transmitter, the other the receiver. Yet the essential element is missing, according to Marcel, for "c'est une communication sans communion".⁸²

He even thinks it is an unreal communication. The other hears my words but he does not hear my real self. By a strange phenomenon, the other comes between me and my reality, he renders me in some way an alien to myself, so that I am not myself when I am with him.

Marcel contrasts this with the opposite phenomenon that occurs when the other whom I feel to be "présent" renews in some way my inner self. This "présence" is, in Marcel's view, revealing, that is, it makes me to be more fully what I would not be without it.

In Marcel's opinion, all this experience is irrefutable but it is difficult to explain on the level of philosophical discourse. The reason for this, in Marcel's view, is that the object as such is linked to a complex of behaviour which is at once able to be taught and transmitted. It is the opposite for "présence". Marcel thinks that it would be quite

fanciful to hope to teach someone the art of making himself "présent", whereas one can only teach "des grimaces".⁸³ In Marcel's estimate, it would be as absurd as trying to teach a woman the way to possess charm.

Marcel thinks, however, that although charm and "présence" cannot be purely and simply identified, charm is one of the ways that "présence" can make itself manifest. This reference is to a particular person in a certain intimacy, not anybody in a public meeting. Marcel views⁸⁴ this as showing up the non-objective nature of "présence". He points out that, in his mind, non-objective does not mean purely subjective in the private sense of the word. He means that it is a question of "intersubjectivité", but he warns that even this term can lead to a mistake if one imagines a sort of thing, something objective, that can be transmitted from subject to subject. Marcel is of the opinion that it is the very idea of a transmission that is excluded, for transmission and communion are totally opposed since, as he sees it, they do not belong to the same region of "being". He thinks rather that when we approach "le mystère ontologique" every transmission takes place "en deçà de l'être".⁸⁵

Here Marcel recommends the need to beware of the snares of discourse. He maintains that in differentiating "présence" from object, there is the risk of making of the former a sort of vaporized object which can be contrasted with the solid, tangible object with which we deal in what we call real life. Marcel claims that when he affirms that "présence" must not be regarded as an object, he means primarily that the act through which we direct ourselves towards it is essentially different from that through which we apprehend an object. In his view,⁸⁶ it is the very possibility of such an apprehension of "présen-

ce" that is excluded in principle.

This will become clearer, Marcel thinks, if we see that "présence" can only be welcomed or refused, and that there is a fundamental difference between seizing and welcoming. In Marcel's view, I cannot welcome what is purely and simply an object, I can only take it in some way or leave it be. Marcel declares that the term "take" here also includes understanding by the mind. He maintains that his belief that "présence" is beyond "préhension",⁸⁷ also means it is beyond comprehension. He affirms "la présence ne peut être au fond qu'invoquée ou évoquée".⁸⁸

In Marcel's mind, "présence" can only be glimpsed. He thinks that those around us are only rarely experienced by us as "présent", for through habit they can become for us like furniture, unless some circumstance like a sickness destroys this everyday aspect. Then the other becomes my neighbour who calls me to show compassion.

Marcel adds further observations to his distinction between "présence" and "objectivité" in "Présence et Immortalité".⁸⁹ There he argues that in his view the more my relationship with the other has been strictly possessive, the more its disappearance will seem to imply the loss of an object. The situation is different, he maintains, if love is not possessive but "oblatif",⁹⁰ to use the terms of the Genevan psychiatrist, Dr. Stocker. "Oblatif" love is clearly "hétérocentrique". Stocker's distinction is similar, in Marcel's view, to the famous distinction of Nygren, between eros and agape. In Marcel's opinion, "oblatif" love involves a reciprocity in which each person becomes a centre for the other in a mysterious unity.

An objection occurs here to Marcel.⁹¹ Is not the very

idea of "présence" ambiguous? There is a "trans-subjective" side to "présence" which lasts beyond death and yet, in distinguishing possessive from "oblatif" love, does not Marcel remain within the consciousness of the subject? Marcel admits he has shown that the being lost will remain the more intimate to me to the extent I have vowed "oblatif" love to him and not sought him for myself. Can one, he asks, say that this "présence" is not only in the memory but real?

In Marcel's view, this objection presupposes that the categories of the world of perception and objectivity can be applied to "présence". He thinks⁹² that the objection is answered if it is seen that we must free ourselves from these categories and transcend them.

In another place⁹³ Marcel writes that, in his opinion, it is impossible to give a rigorous definition of "présence". "Présence, Marcel thinks, can only be evoked through direct and unimpeachable experiences, which do not arise from the notional faculties men use to obtain objects - Marcel is presumably referring to "primary reflection". He is implying we can only attain "présence" through "secondary reflection" on concrete experiences.

Marcel gives⁹⁴ as example the experience of bereavement. Some people whom we thought were friends can only pronounce stereotyped formulae which appear to spring from an automatic machine. They are not "présent" to us, nor we to them. Someone else, on the contrary, by a look or an intonation or a quality of silence, brings us, Marcel thinks, an irrefutable "témoignage de présence".⁹⁵ Marcel believes that in this experience we were together and this "coprésence" leaves behind it a wake that prolongs it. He thinks that each of us, if we carefully examine our lives, can appreciate "présen-

ces" which differ completely from "des rapports mondains et professionnels et des obligations qui en résultent".⁹⁶

To clarify what he means by "présence" Marcel distinguishes it from constancy, while recognizing that there is no opposition between these two realities. Constancy refers more to the self than to the other, in Marcel's view. "Je suis constant pour moi, par rapport à moi, à mon dessein".⁹⁷

On the other hand, the person, as Marcel sees it, is "présent" for the other, or more precisely, for the Thou. "Présence" is not measured by the fact of manifesting oneself in some external fashion, professing fidelity in any area of life to another individual. Rather, it is definable in a less objective way as allowing the other to feel that I am with him. Marcel thinks that circumstances will make little difference to "présence", as, in his view, "inconditionnalité est le signe même de la présence".⁹⁸ "Présence" is incarnated in the "nous", in an indestructible communion, according to Marcel.

"Présence", in Marcel's view, derives from charity since it is the "don absolu de soi".⁹⁹ It is a gift which implies no impoverishment of the giver since "présence" belongs to an order where categories valid in the world of things cease to be applicable. These are categories which are linked to objects, Marcel thinks. He declares that if an individual possesses four objects and gives two of them away, he is that much the poorer if they are part of his substance. A relation of "présence", in Marcel's view, does not render the giver any the poorer.

"Présence", according to Marcel, is "intersubjective" since it expresses a will to reveal the other to me, which presupposes that I place no obstacle to the revelation. At

the root of "présence" Marcel sees a being who takes me into consideration, whereas no object takes me into account. "Présence" implies that two individuals are together in the light, transcending the categories of objectivity. As an example of the category of objectivity, Marcel sites the case of a doctor examining his patient.¹⁰⁰

"Présence" for Marcel is intimately linked with "being" for he maintains it "correspond à une certaine prise de l'être sur nous".¹⁰¹ He adds that a being "n'est pas un être pour moi s'il n'est une présence".¹⁰² By "présence" he means that I do not treat the other as merely placed before me. Between him and me there exists a relationship which implies that he is in me.

Finally, in Marcel's view, "présence" is something to which one can remain faithful since fidelity prolongs "présence". This "présence" to which one is faithful is not the carefully preserved effigy of an object that has now disappeared from sight, since that metaphysically would be less even than an object, in Marcel's opinion, and would be merely an idol.

Footnotes to Chapter Five

1. DR. P.193.
2. ibid. P.193.
3. ibid. P.52.
4. DH. P.110.
5. Howard's End P.78.
6. DR. P.192.
7. PI. P.23.
8. ME.II. P.10.
9. ibid. P.10.
10. ibid. P.11.
11. ibid. P.11.
12. ibid. P.23.
13. ibid. P.24.
14. ibid. P.24.
15. ibid. P.24.
16. ibid. P.25.
17. ibid. P.25.
18. ibid. P.25.
19. ibid. P.25.
20. ibid. P.25.
21. ibid. P.25.
22. ibid. P.25.
23. Troisfontaines Tome I. P.12.
24. PI. P.22.
25. HV. P.17.
26. ME.I. P.163.
27. ibid. P.164.
28. ibid. P.164.
29. HV. P.25.
30. ibid. P.25.
31. ibid. P.25.
32. ibid. P.25.
33. ibid. P.26.
34. ibid. P.26-27.
35. DH. P.59.
36. ibid. P.59. Marcel thinks that talk of "I-Thou" relationships is linked to the development of the phenomenological outlook and method.
37. P.145.

38. *ibid.* P.145.
39. DR. P.48.
40. *ibid.* P.49.
41. *ibid.* P.49.
42. *ibid.* P.49.
43. *ibid.* P.49.
44. *ibid.* P.50.
45. Nouvelles Nourritures P.113.
46. DR. P.50.
47. EA.I. P.209.
48. *ibid.* P.210.
49. *ibid.* P.210.
50. HP. P.75.
51. DR. P.48.
52. *ibid.* P.48.
53. *ibid.* P.99.
54. *ibid.* P.99.
55. HV. P.28.
56. *ibid.* P.28.
57. ME.II. P.12.
58. *ibid.* P.12.
59. PSLT. P.29-30.
60. *ibid.* P.20-21.
61. HP. P.70.
62. *ibid.* P.70.
63. *ibid.* P.70.
64. *ibid.* P.70.
65. *ibid.* P.70.
66. ME.II. P.12.
67. *ibid.* P.12.
68. *ibid.* P.13.
69. *ibid.* P.18.
70. *ibid.* P.19.
71. *ibid.* P.20.
72. *ibid.* P.20.
73. ME.I. P.197-8.
74. PI. P.188.
75. *ibid.* P.189.
76. PR. P.123.
77. ME.II. P.171-2.
78. *ibid.* P.171.

79. ME.I. P.220.
80. ibid. P.221.
81. ibid. P.221.
82. ibid. P.221.
83. ibid. P.222.
84. ibid. P.222.
85. ibid. P.223.
86. ibid. P.223.
87. ibid. P.224.
88. ibid. P.224.
89. P.185-187.
90. PI. P.186.
91. ibid. P.186.
92. ibid. P.187.
93. DH. P.94.
94. ibid. P.95.
95. ibid. P.95.
96. ibid. P.95.
97. DR. P.200.
98. HV. P.85.
99. EA.I. P.85.
100. PI. P.189.
101. PEA. P.79.
102. ibid. P.81.

CONCLUSION

The first point to be discussed is Marcel's epistemology. His basic distinction between "primary" and "secondary reflection" would seem to be a valid way of distinguishing man's intellectual faculties. Man is aware that he has the intellectual capacity both to reason logically and to arrive at truth through intuitive apprehension. Marcel, however, seems to have an irrational distrust of the former, which he labels "primary reflection", a distrust in keeping with his view of modern technological society. Surely man's ability to reason need not be a priori so debilitating as always to lead the thinker away from participation. It seems Marcel fails to recognize sufficiently the power of reason to arrive at real truth and the worth of man's logical capacity. He appears, however, to be correct in asserting the inability of "primary reflection" to arrive at "being", a view that is in agreement with the testimony of many of the world's philosophical and religious thinkers.

Marcel's view of the difference between problem and mystery appears to be valid, and his notion of "recueillement" accords with man's experience of himself as a thinker who reflects on his perceptions and intuitions.

Marcel's notion of man's spiritual development also tallies with human experience. Man's spiritual life, the immersion of his person in "being", seems to grow through love of self and the other as Thou. Such a conception would appear to have the support of modern psychology and the age-old human experience of religion. It would seem, however, that Marcel places too much emphasis on self-consciousness as the primary source of egotism. There are surely other

ways of being self-centred that are open to the individual who makes himself the centre of his world.

The primary distinction emphasized in this thesis, between "being" and "having", appears valid for man's spiritual progress, and Marcel also seems to echo man's experience when he exposes the dangers of a life led according to the categories of "having". It is rather his notion of "being" that is open to criticism.

Clearly man has the ability to reflect on his knowledge and arrive at concepts and abstractions through "primary reflection", and at reality through "secondary reflection". The question arises, however, to what extent "being", as it is described by Marcel, is a reality apart from the mind and soul of man. Man can certainly reflect on himself and attain something, but does "being" really exist apart from man?

Marcel describes "being" as supra-personal and inter-personal, but the reader is not convinced that "being" corresponds to anything other than an intuition and a psychological relationship between men. Each man has his own ability to recollect himself, and each can reach his own conclusion about the object of his "recueillement", but that does not prove that "being" extends beyond man's personal experience. "Being" for Marcel seems to have no supra-human reality in the world of things and animals. "Being" for him is restricted to the realm of persons and may be valid in psychological terms as an expression of man's spiritual growth within himself and in his inter-personal relationships. "Being" appears a summary term for all those qualities that mark the person - freedom, truth, beauty and love.

The reader is left in doubt, however, whether "being" really exists apart from man's psychological state. Marcel

himself is certain that it exists, he maintains that it must exist if the world is not to be absurd, but he fails to say clearly what it is. "Being", for Marcel, is the object of an intuition which is personal to him and therefore incommunicable to the reader. What may be the truth subjectively fails when it comes to be put into the flesh of words. Marcel often stumbles in vagueness, paradox and generalization when he attempts to convey his own experience of "being". He merely says it remains after man has tried to analyse the facts of experience. Such a definition provides little in the way of enlightenment. It is far from clear that "being" must be or that the world is not absurd.

Marcel seems on firmer ground when he outlines his notion of "being" in terms of paradox and mystery, for only in this way can he mirror the complexity of man's psychology. His notion of "being" also seems valid on the associated religious level, since it accords with the views about human nature and its spiritual growth held by the great religious leaders of men. It would seem to equate with the concept of "life"¹ as found in the Gospels and with the stress there on love as the way to "life".

Marcel's fundamental weakness, a weakness to which metaphysics as a subject is liable, is that his philosophy of "being" is essentially unproven and unprovable. He himself questions² whether there is a delimited frontier that clearly separates mysticism and metaphysics. Faith and adoration are for Marcel "une terra firma"³ on which the metaphysician must lean if he is to escape "l'ornière épistémologique".⁴ Marcel indeed seems to confuse metaphysics and mysticism as he clothes "being" with religious terms and connotations, which give a certain dignity to his intuition but in no way vali-

date it. He would appear indeed to cheat in using the same terms for sets of ideas and realities of Marcellian and Christian import that are not traditionally equated - the "spiritual life", "salvation of the soul", "sacral" and so on. He seems none the less to give a valid interpretation of these traditional terms in outlining his view of man's spiritual development.

It can be said in conclusion, therefore, that Marcel's analysis of man's psychological and spiritual growth has much to recommend it but that his notion of "being" remains inconclusive as an extra-personal reality. It seems to need clarification and support from the traditional metaphysical ideas of "being". It might also be strengthened by reference to religious writings which could help him add to the supra-personal elements with which he tries to invest "being". Marcel hesitates to formally associate "being" with God and therefore deprives his metaphysics of the scope it might otherwise attain. His philosophy will remain, nevertheless, as a witness to the dignity of man and the value of his interpersonal relationships.

Footnotes to the Conclusion

1. Luke 10/25-27.
2. DR. P.190.
3. *ibid.* P.190.
4. *ibid.* P.190.

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